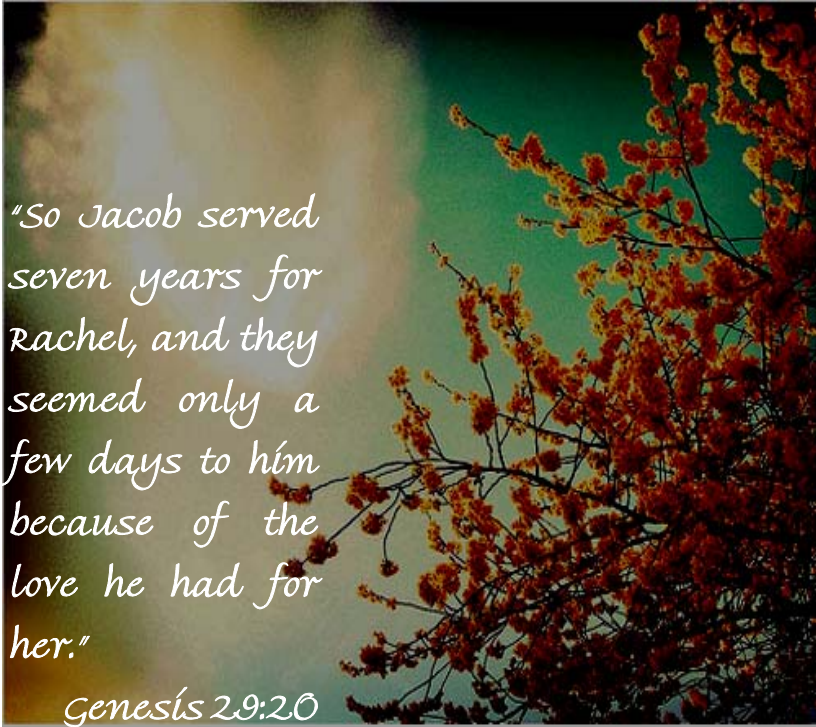




Sowing the Word



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

genesis 29:20

Genesis 29-30

April 15th, 2009

So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped *them* to understand the reading.

(Nehemiah 8:8)

Table of Contents

Outline.....	3-4
Pastor Jim’s Notes and Helps.....	4-6
Q&A With Pastor Phil.....	7-8
With the Word Commentary.....	9-10
Pages to take Notes.....	11-13

Helpful Study Resource:

Explore the Book by J. Sidlow Baxter

Commentary:

The commentary used with permission throughout
this booklet is:

With the Word Bible Commentary

by Warren W. Wiersbe.

ISBN 0-8407-9108-9

Outline

- I. Creation (1–2)
- II. The Fall of Mankind (3)
- III. Early History of Mankind – First Thousand Years (4-5)
- IV. Noah and the Flood (6-10)
- V. Tower of Babel (11)
- VI. Abraham (12-25:18)
- VII. Isaac (25:19-27)
- VIII. Jacob (28-36)**
- IX. Joseph (37-50)

Detailed Outline For This Week

VIII. Jacob (27-36)

- A. Jacob's Deception (27)
 - B. Jacob's Vision – Beginning with God (28)
 - C. Jacob's Marriages, Kids & struggle with Laban (29-30)
 - i. Jacob meets with Rachel (29:1–12):
 - ii. Jacob meets Laban (29:13-17)
 - iii. Jacob works for Rachel's hand (29:18-21)
 - iv. Laban deceives Jacob with Leah (29:22-25)
 - v. Jacob marries Rachel also (29:26-30)
 - vi. Jacob's four wives
 - 1. Leah (29:28): Jacob's first wife
 - 2. Rachel (29:30): Jacob's second wife
 - 3. Bilhah (29:29; 30:1–4): Rachel's servant
 - 4. Zilpah (30:9): Leah's servant
- VII. Jacob's Children
- 1. Reuben (29:31–32): Leah's first son
 - 2. Simeon (29:33): Leah's second son
 - 3. Levi (29:34): Leah's third son
 - 4. Judah (29:35): Leah's fourth son
 - 5. Dan (30:5–6): Bilhah's first son
 - 6. Naphtali (30:7–8): Bilhah's second son
 - 7. Gad (30:9–11): Zilpah's first son

8. Asher (30:12–13): Zilpah's second son
9. Issachar (30:14–18): Leah's fifth son
10. Zebulun (30:19–20): Leah's sixth son
11. Joseph (30:22–24): Rachel's first son
12. Benjamin (35:16–18): Rachel's second son
13. Jacob's one daughter, Dinah (through Leah) (30:21)

Notes for Booklet

Chapter 29 Highlights and Helps by Pastor Jim

Jacob knows God...but has a long way to go

- As we read in chapter 28, Jacob came to know the real God, because He saw Jacob and established a relationship with him. Yet, Jacob still has a lot of things hindering what his relationship with God can be. In these chapters, we begin to see some of that dealt with.

Into the hands of Laban

- Jacob, although now one that knows God, still is very much "Jacob". As a reminder, Jacob name means *one who strives, manipulates and connives for things*. It is not only his name, but very much his character. Yet, God's work is to change Jacob from this, to an Israel – *one who is governed, led and provided for by God*.
- God brings Jacob into a relationship that many believe God intended to show Jacob his folly. Laban is a better schemer than Jacob is – and Jacob is going to be out- schemed. He is about to get a taste of his own medicine, as it were.
- It is an interesting thing to ponder in our own lives, that God might bring people into our lives, whose sin, folly and character is abrasive to us. Yet, it might really be that what they are doing, is only a reflection of what is in our own heart. I hope that makes some sense. It is worth paying attention to and realizing that God knows that "Iron does sharpen Iron" – as the proverb says...He might specifically be bringing us into relationship with people to allow their presence in our lives to expose and purify character traits in us.

Love is Patient

- One of the beautiful verses in chapter 29 is verse 20. It tells us that although Jacob had to wait seven years to marry Rachel, “they seemed only a few days to him because of the love he had for her”
- In 1 Corinthians 13, God describes real love. The first characteristic is that Love is Patient. This is vital to understand and to see.
- The contrast is lust. Lust is always impatient! It wants things and wants them now, no matter the cost.
- Honestly, this is a key understanding. For many – singles, parents of kids and more – there is something here that should shout at us. Many wonder if they are in love with someone and it is not always as easy as we would like to tell. Yet, one of the things that should stand paramount – is real love is willing to be patient. Lust is not.
- In many relationships, one partner has pushed for intimacy too quickly. Often using the phrase “I love you so much...that I just cannot wait”. Understand clearly from scripture – that is not love! Love is patient. Love is others-centered. It would never want to harm someone, or bring them dishonor. Real love, the love God has for us is patient.

Jacob's four wives

- In one sense, my first thought about Jacob's four wives is – *yuck*. I think that is a right response. We look on this, and rightly we can see this is not what God intended for mankind.
- I always love Jesus' response to dealing with Marriage and all the messes mankind has gotten into (Matthew 19). He called us to go back to the original model – one man, one woman – for life. That is God's plan. Any deviation is always less than God's best.
- Jacob ends up with four wives, and a simple reading of this passage can easily show you that it was not good. There is jealousy, pain, anguish that mark a relationship that was meant to bring oneness and togetherness. Jacob never seems to gain this, in part, because of the mess of his four wives.
- God will overrule this mess for good, but don't read into any of this that having four wives is ok. It is a mess...it is so much less than having God's best

Chapter 30 Highlights and Helps by Pastor Jim

Jacob's rods

- As Jacob seeks to get his own flock, to make a living and a future for his family, he does something interesting. He makes a deal with Laban about which animals will be his and which will be Laban's. At first, this could speak of a beautiful picture of having all that God sovereignly and specifically provides for Jacob.
- Sadly, Jacob attempts to help God out. He strips poplar rods and places them before the best of the livestock, seeking to cause them to breed striped and speckled offspring for himself. The question arises – does such a thing work? Simple answer – no. This is probably something of an old wives tale – thinking that this would bring spotted and striped animals. That is now how it works biologically.
- So, what is happening here? Here we see Jacob, still being Jacob. Unable to simply trust God with his provisions and future, he strives. In reality, his striving is not helping things at all. But because he is still so far from living a dependant and trusting God relationship – he has to do something. There is something here for us to look at – to wonder how much of this is in us – a constant striving, even when entirely unhelpful.
- Later, Jacob would come to the understanding that it had nothing to do with his striving that he gets the flocks he does – but all because and only because of God's hand and blessing. Oh, that God would help us to see this...and be purged of striving...

Thus I have been in your house twenty years; I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock, and you have changed my wages ten times. Unless the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, had been with me, surely now you would have sent me away empty-handed. God has seen my affliction and the labor of my hands, and rebuked you last night." (Genesis 31:41-42)

Q & A With Pastor Phil

Why was Jacob blessed in spite of his bigamy and deceptive methods?

As we follow the story of Abraham and his descendants, we see examples of great faith. But, we are sure to see the failures as well. We discover that God called Abraham when his family was serving other gods (Josh 24:2). God spoke to him and gave him a great promise. Abraham was not worthy of this promise. Nevertheless he became the recipient of God's grace. As the story unfolds, again, we see the unworthiness of Isaac and Rebekah. In the midst of this, we see the faithfulness of God who extended the promise to their son Jacob.

Jacob then becomes an interesting study for us. Much of his life was marked with striving and deceptive methods. In Genesis 29 we observe his marriage to both Leah and Rachel. He fathers a total of twelve sons through his two wives and their maids. Later in chapter 30, Jacob uses questionable methods to multiply his livestock. In all of this, Jacob was blessed by God. Even Laban, Jacob's crafty father-in-law was blessed on account of Jacob (Gen 30:27). Why was Jacob blessed in spite of his bigamy and deceptive practices? Why would a holy God use such flawed individuals to bring about his purposes? These are questions that we honestly wrestle with.

The Problem with People

There is an old saying that goes something like this: God would love to use good people. The problem is He can't find any. There is some truth to that. Apart from Jesus Christ and the righteousness He imparts, there are no good people. I remember Paul's words in Romans 7:18, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells". Aside from God's work in us, we are utterly sinful. This applies to every one of us. The trouble is we don't see it that way. We tend to view ourselves in relation to others. We also glory in our good deeds and believe that these works somehow should earn God's favor in our lives. What we fail to realize is that God looks upon the whole of mankind and sees that sin has tainted all of us. His standard is so much higher than ours. This is what makes grace truly amazing. God used and blessed Jacob for the same reason He blesses and uses us today - we are the recipients of grace. It is undeserved and unmerited. We can't earn it or purchase it. It is God's free gift.

He Works in Spite of Us

If God does anything through our lives, if He uses us in any way, it is in spite of us not because of us. There are a lot of people serving the Lord in various ministries who believe they have something to offer God. After taking inventory of our talents we may feel that we are just too good for God to pass up. Beware of becoming prideful. The gifts present in our lives are just that – gifts. These gifts did not originate with us. Therefore we should not boast in them (1 Cor 4:7). God chooses to give us gifts so His power might be displayed in us, but they are given in spite of us. Not because we are deserving of them.

Grace is Never an Excuse

If the blessings of God are not directly earned by us, does it matter how we live? Absolutely! There are always those who see grace as an excuse to live poorly. The trouble is, they don't understand grace. The true recipient of grace does not see it as a license to sin. Instead something marvelous happens. Grace draws us to a place of greater surrender. This is what took place in Jacob's life. Although much of his life was spent living in his own strength, he would eventually see the foolishness of living in such a way. God never cut him off – even when Jacob was making poor choices. But, he did suffer the consequences of his actions. The same is true for us. If we live poorly we will surely have consequences that arise from that sin. Moreover, the believer has the Holy Spirit living within them. We are no longer slaves to sin (Rom 6:6). Since we have new life in Christ we ought to die to our former way of life. The true Christian is not content to live in sin. Instead, grace is drawing them to a greater surrender.

What About His Marriage?

One of the most troubling things in Jacobs life was his marriage to both Leah and Rachel and his relationship with their maids. Polygamy was fairly common during this time, but it was never God's intention. It is important to realize that the Bible is giving us a record of history. It records the fact that Jacob had multiple wives, but it never condones his actions. If you look at the end result, much sorrow stemmed from the situation. The same is true today. Some of our most painful experiences originated from relationships outside of God's design. Although this is one of those ugly chapters in Jacob's life, God was still at work fulfilling His promise to Abraham.

With the Word Bible Commentary

Genesis 29

Abraham's faithful servant had found a wife for Isaac, but Jacob had to find his own wife. God's plans are different for each of us, and we must accept His will (Phil. 2:12–13).

The guest (1–14). God's providence brought Jacob to the well just as Rachel was arriving. (See Gen. 24:27.) True to his scheming nature, Jacob tried to get rid of the shepherds so he could have her all to himself! It was love at first sight. That first month in Uncle Laban's home must have been heaven on earth to Jacob, but it didn't take long for things to change.

The worker (15–30). Jacob was not wealthy as Isaac was when he got his wife (Gen. 24:36, 53), so he had to work for his uncle to have the woman he loved. But love takes the burden out of work and makes time pass quickly. Jacob the schemer met his match in Laban and soon began to reap what he had sown. Jacob had deceived his father, and his father-in-law deceived him.

The father (31–35). The building of Jacob's family was vitally important to God's plan of salvation, for God would use the nation of Israel to give the world the Bible and the Redeemer. Although Rachel had great beauty, she was unable to conceive, while Leah gave birth to four sons: Reuben ("see, a son!"), Simeon ("hearing"), Levi ("joined"), and Judah ("praise"). The Lord was in control and had a special purpose for each son (Ps. 139:14–16; Eccles. 3:2).

—Wiersbe, W. W. (1997, c1991). *With the word Bible commentary* (Ge 29:1). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

With the Word Bible Commentary

Genesis 30

There are two major themes in this chapter: the building of Jacob's family (vv. 1–24), and the building of Jacob's fortune (vv. 25–43). Various people (including Jacob) thought they were in control of the situation, but all of it was in the hands of God.

Having grown up his mother's favored son (25:28), Jacob was accustomed to a woman telling him what to do. But now he had *four* different women involved in his life! When he came home from the fields, he never knew which one he would be living with! The schemer discovered the pain that people feel when their lives are selfishly manipulated by others.

Rachel will have only two sons, Joseph and Benjamin, and Joseph will save the whole family from destruction.

Laban tried to trick Jacob and make him poor, but God overruled and made Jacob a very wealthy man. In fact, God even blessed Laban because of Jacob, and the old trickster admitted it (v. 27)! It was God's blessing and not Jacob's schemes that increased the flocks. God was keeping the promises He had made at Bethel (28:13–15). When we are in difficult situations, we can trust God to care for us.

—Wiersbe, W. W. (1997, c1991). *With the word Bible commentary* (Ge 30:1). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

