

The Story of Jacob
Heroes of Faith Series
Week 9: Sister Rivalry

Scripture

Genesis 30

Motivation

Underneath all the human striving in this story is a God who continues to build His covenant people—not because they're faithful, but because He is. Genesis 30 reminds us that God's promises continue **even when** we're taking matters into our own hands.

What Got Us Here? (Genesis 29)

- Jacob arrives in the East (running from Esau) and meets Rachel at a well
- Jacob stays with her father, Laban
- Jacob works for Laban 7 years to marry Rachel but is tricked into marrying Leah
- Jacob then marries Rachel too, agreeing to work for Laban another 7 years
- Leah has four sons by Jacob, but Rachel remains childless

Through Jacob's story we're discovering that "The Bible is a story of God finding broken people and doing beautiful things through them." — Chad Bird

This quote reflects Genesis 29 well...

- Jacob the deceiver gets deceived
- Leah is unloved yet chosen by God to bear the lineage of Judah
- Rachel, though beautiful, wrestles with barrenness

God's grace quietly works through messy relationships and painful waiting.

Information

What Does God Say About Himself in This Story?

- **God is patient with us and will give what we need when we need it**
 - ✓ Dissatisfaction with what we have/don't have distorts what we think we need and when we need it
- Genesis 30:1 (NLT)** When Rachel [*the one Jacob loved*] saw that she wasn't having any children for Jacob, she became jealous of her sister. She pleaded with Jacob, "Give me children, or I'll die!" **2** Then Jacob became furious with Rachel. "Am I God?" he asked. "He's the one who has kept you from having children!"
- Jealousy points to a deep feeling of dissatisfaction with what a person has
 - Jacob realized that only God could satisfy her longings

- ✓ Dissatisfaction is often a result of comparison

Genesis 30:3 (NLT) Then Rachel told him, “Take my maid, Bilhah, and sleep with her. She will bear children for me, and through her I can have a family, too.” **4** So Rachel gave her servant, Bilhah, to Jacob as a wife, and he slept with her. **5** Bilhah became pregnant and presented him with a son. **6** Rachel named him Dan, for she said, “God has vindicated me! He has heard my request and given me a son.” **7** Then Bilhah became pregnant again and gave Jacob a second son. **8** Rachel named him Naphtali, for she said, “I have struggled hard with my sister, and I’m winning!”

- ✓ Comparison leads to competition

Genesis 30:9 (NLT) Meanwhile, Leah [*the one Jacob didn’t love*] realized that she wasn’t getting pregnant anymore, so she took her servant, Zilpah, and gave her to Jacob as a wife. **10** Soon Zilpah presented him with a son. **11** Leah named him Gad, for she said, “How fortunate I am!” **12** Then Zilpah gave Jacob a second son. **13** And Leah named him Asher, for she said, “What joy is mine! Now the other women will celebrate with me.”

Comparison turns people into competitors. Instead of celebrating life, they turn childbirth into a scoreboard. Both keep producing, but neither feels satisfied.

■ **God is faithful (in our unfaithfulness) which should make us to cling to Him**

- ✓ Rachel trades a night with Jacob for mandrakes

Genesis 30:14 (NLT) One day during the wheat harvest, Reuben found some mandrakes growing in a field and brought them to his mother, Leah. Rachel begged Leah, “Please give me some of your son’s mandrakes.” **15** But Leah angrily replied, “Wasn’t it enough that you stole my husband? Now will you steal my son’s mandrakes, too?” Rachel answered, “I will let Jacob sleep with you tonight if you give me some of the mandrakes.”

What are mandrakes, and why are they so important?

- **Superstitious Plant:** Thought to increase a woman’s chance of conceiving
- **Reuben finds them:** Leah’s son discovers them during harvest
- **Rachel wants them:** She hopes they’ll help her finally have a child
- **Symbol of striving:** Represents human attempts to gain God’s blessing by natural or superstitious means rather than trusting Him

- ✓ God meets us even in our mess

Genesis 30:16 (NLT) So that evening, as Jacob was coming home from the fields, Leah went out to meet him. “You must come and sleep with me tonight!” she said. “I have paid for you with some mandrakes that my son found.” So that night he slept with Leah. **17** And God answered Leah’s prayers. She became pregnant again and gave birth to a fifth son for Jacob. **18** She named him Issachar, for she said, “God has rewarded me for giving my servant to my husband as a wife.” **19** Then Leah became pregnant again and gave birth to a sixth son for Jacob. **20** She named him Zebulun, for she said, “God has given me a good reward. Now my husband will treat me with respect, for I have given him six sons.” **21** Later she gave birth to a daughter and named her Dinah. Leah conceives again—not because of the trade, but because God listens.

- ✓ God’s timing is better than our schemes

Genesis 30:22 (NLT) Then God remembered Rachel’s plight and answered her prayers by enabling her to have children. **23** She became pregnant and gave birth to a son. “God has removed my disgrace,” she said. **24** And she named him Joseph, for she said, “May the Lord add yet another son to my family.” God keeps showing up even when Rachel is bargaining with her brokenness.

- **God is provider and prospers His people in ways they didn’t expect/deserve**

- ✓ Jacob wants to leave, but Laban wants him to stay. They strike a deal, and God blesses Jacob’s flocks through some strange breeding practices
- ✓ This isn’t a get-rich-quick scheme—it’s the hand of God quietly working in Jacob’s favor, even in a manipulative environment

“Stop measuring God’s faithfulness by how fast your prayer gets answered.”

Application

What Do I Do With This?

- **Take inventory of where you’re forcing things to happen**

Where are you trying to force what only God can give?

- **Turn your envy and jealousy into prayer**

Rachel demanded children. Leah craved love. Both women missed what they already had. Rid yourself of comparison and bring your longings to God.

- **Trust that God is working even when it feels like He’s silent**

You may not see it today. But God’s promises never fail. His timeline is not your enemy—it’s His mercy.

“God is still building His people through broken families, just like yours.”