

Union United Methodist Church
Fall FOCUS Bible School, 2022
FOCUS: Followers Of Christ Understanding Scripture
Study: Book of Genesis

Week 8: November 16, 2022

Jacob's Family; Reconciliation with Esau

This Week's Study: **Genesis chapters 30 through 33**

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1. Recap & Reminder

- **Overview of Genesis**

The table below gives a breakdown of the chapters of Genesis, with themes that we shall be exploring in this study. We shall cover one theme per week. Our next week's study is Genesis 30 through 33 for the week.

| From | To | Theme |
|-------------|-----------|--|
| 1 | 4 | Creation & The Fall, Original Sin |
| 5 | 10 | Adam through Noah: Judgement & New Covenant |
| 11 | 14 | Babel, A New Beginning in Abram |
| 15 | 17 | Abrahamic Covenants |
| 18 | 20 | Intercession & Judgement: Sodom & Gomorrah |
| 21 | 25 | Isaac - A Promise Fulfilled; Faithfulness Proven |
| 26 | 30 | Abrahamic Covenants: Second Generation - Jacob & Esau |
| 30 | 33 | Jacob's Family; Reconciliation with Esau |
| 34 | 38 | Abrahamic Covenants: Third Generation - Jacob's Children |
| 39 | 42 | Joseph's Trials & Elevation |
| 43 | 47 | Joseph & Migration to Egypt |
| 48 | 50 | Israel in Egypt, Death of Jacob |

Please refer to previous weeks' outlines and messages for more background and to catch up. You can find these on our website: <https://unionumcnc.com>

2. Genesis 29:31 to 33 Overview

Last week studied chapters 26 through 29, which covers the second covenant generation after Abraham and Sarah. That is, the family of Isaac and Rebekah, and the challenges they faced brought on by parental favoritism, and Isaac's

desire to pass on the covenant blessing to Esau. We saw how Esau despised his birthright (treated it lightly) and agreed that Jacob could have it and the aftermath of that. Today's study is a continuation of what we started with Jacob's life and family. We see Jacob's growing family as he labored for his uncle Laban in exchange for his two wives and how he came to have thirteen children with his wives and their two maidservants.

- **Genesis 29:31- 30:23 Jacob's Household: Rivalry Between Wives, 13 Children**

- **Leah's Story**

- **Her Plight**

Possible induced into an arranged marriage with a man she might not have been in love with. An unloved wife.

- **Genesis 29:31-35 Leah's Children & Their Interesting Names**

- **Some Lessons**

- **God intervened to help Leah**

29:31 When the Lord saw that Leah was unloved, he opened her womb; but Rachel was barren

- **Leah had a voice - in a patriarchal (male-controlled) society**

She could give names to her children and she used that to communicate how she felt about herself and her life and marriage

- **Leah's Growth: unloved to thanksgiving & praise**

This is evident in the names she gave her children:

- Reuben ("see, a son!")

- She said, "It is because the Lord has seen my misery. Surely my husband will love me now."

- Simeon ("one who hears")

- She said, "Because the Lord heard that I am not loved, he gave me this one too."

- Levi ("attached")

- She said, "Now at last my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons."

- Judah ("praise")

"This time I will praise the Lord."

- **Jacob came to love (at least value and respect) Leah**

- **Rachel's Story**

- **Her Plight**

- She must have loved Jacob but had to go along with her father's scheme

- **Forced to share love of her life**

- On her wedding night, she had to watch her beloved (Jacob) being deceived into having Leah. And then she had to have her sister for a rival. That must have stung...

- **Identity & Self-Esteem Crisis**

- She had to suffer the humiliation of watching her sister and rival having so many kids for nearly a decade without a child of her own. Until finally she could bear it no longer:

30:1 When Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, she envied her sister; and she said to Jacob, "Give me children, or I shall die!"

- **Some Lessons**

- **God is impartial - helped Rachel too**

- 22Then God remembered Rachel, and God heeded her and opened her womb.

- **Rachel's Growth**

- She seemed to have gained further dependence on God:

- 23She conceived and bore a son, and said, "God has taken away my reproach"; 24and she named him Joseph, saying, "May the Lord add to me another son!"

- **Genesis 30:25-43 Jacob Increases in Wealth**

- **Jacob's Desire for Independence & Return to Canaan**

- After gaining two wives and with family responsibilities, Jacob was eager

for financial independence and to build his own household and family. By this time, he had served Laban for at least 14 years:

30:25When Rachel had borne Joseph, Jacob said to Laban, "Send me away, that I may go to my own home and country. 26Give me my wives and my children for whom I have served you, and let me go; for you know very well the service I have given you."

30:30For you had little before I came, and it has increased abundantly; and the Lord has blessed you wherever I turned. But now when shall I provide for my own household also?" 31He said,

- **Jacob & Laban's Relationship**

- **Laban Acknowledges Jacob's Contribution**

- Clearly, Laban acknowledged Jacob's contribution to his wealth and knew that it was because of God's blessing on Jacob

- 30:27 Laban said to him, "If you will allow me to say so, I have learned by divination that **the Lord has blessed me because of you;**

- **Jacob's Faithfulness**

- In presenting his case to Laban, Jacob could point to his faithful service. He clearly worked very hard for his uncle and was not a lazy man.

- 30:26Give me my wives and my children for whom I have served you, and let me go; for you know very well the service I have given you."

- NRSV

- 31:6You know that I have served your father with all my strength; 7yet your father has cheated me and changed my wages ten times, but God did not permit him to harm me. NRSV

- **Jacob's Deal-making & Dependence on God**

- **Unique Deal - Seems a Losing Bet**

Jacob proposed a deal to his uncle that seemed to be something that would surely fail. But he did so confidently. We see the reasons later on in the narrative - he was led by the Lord to propose that deal.

30:32let me pass through all your flock today, removing from it every speckled and spotted sheep and every black lamb, and the spotted and speckled among the goats; and such shall be my wages. 33So my honesty will answer for me later, when you come to look into my wages with you. Every one that is not speckled and spotted among the goats and black among the lambs, if found with me, shall be counted stolen.”
NRSV

- **Laban Did Not Hesitate to Take Undue Advantage of Jacob**

Laban saw the proposed deal as another chance to take advantage of Jacob. He readily agreed!

30:34Laban said, “Good! Let it be as you have said.” 35But that day Laban removed the male goats that were striped and spotted, and all the female goats that were speckled and spotted, every one that had white on it, and every lamb that was black, and put them in charge of his sons; 36and he set a distance of three days' journey between himself and Jacob, while Jacob was pasturing the rest of Laban's flock

Jacob later highlighted how much Laban had cheated him, when he said this to his wives:

31:6You know that I have served your father with all my strength; 7yet your father has cheated me and changed my wages ten times, but God did not permit him to harm me. NRSV

- **Jacob Guided by God**

There was a method to Jacob's seemingly mad proposal. The Lord had shown him what to do. We can learn a lot from this ... in particular, we should not make moves in career or family, etc. without waiting on the Lord for direction.

31:10 "During the mating of the flock I once had a dream in which I looked up and saw that the male goats that leaped upon the flock were striped, speckled, and mottled. 11 Then the angel of God said to me in the dream, 'Jacob,' and I said, 'Here I am!' 12 And he said, 'Look up and see that all the goats that leap on the flock are striped, speckled, and mottled; for I have seen all that Laban is doing to you. NRSV

- **The Blessing at Work**

In Jacob's growing wealth, he readily acknowledged that it was God that had blessed him. Whatever deal they agreed, he prospered in it - this was the blessing at work in his life.

31:7 "your father has cheated me and changed my wages ten times, but God did not permit him to harm me. 8 If he said, 'The speckled shall be your wages,' then all the flock bore speckled; and if he said, 'The striped shall be your wages,' then all the flock bore striped. 9 Thus God has taken away the livestock of your father, and given them to me." NRSV

- **Genesis 31: Jacob & Laban's Showdown, God's Intervention, Peaceful Parting**

- **The Lord's Instructions: Jacob to Return to Canaan**

It was time for Jacob to return to the land of promise - where God had sent Abraham in the first place. The Lord instructed him to move:

31:1 Now Jacob heard that the sons of Laban were saying, "Jacob has taken all that was our father's; he has gained all this wealth from what

belonged to our father." 2And **Jacob saw that Laban did not regard him as favorably as he did before.** 3Then the Lord said to Jacob, "Return to the land of your ancestors and to your kindred, and I will be with you." NRSV

- **Jacob Obeys, with Lean & Rachel in Support**

It is interesting that at this point, Jacob called his wives to get their support for the forthcoming move back to Canaan. He did not seem to impose anything on them. He made his case (31:4-13), and the wives agreed and said they would go. They voluntarily agreed to go.

31:14Then Rachel and Leah answered him, "Is there any portion or inheritance left to us in our father's house? **15Are we not regarded by him as foreigners? For he has sold us, and he has been using up the money given for us.** 16All the property that God has taken away from our father belongs to us and to our children; now then, do whatever God has said to you."

31:17 So Jacob arose, and set his children and his wives on camels;

Children are not blind to what goes on around them...

Even Laban's children were not sympathetic to him on account of how he treated Jacob.

- **Laban Pursues, God Protects Jacob**

When we obey God, we can be sure of God's protection and provision. Here we see God protecting Jacob from Laban.

31:23 "He (Laban) pursued him for seven days until he caught up with him in the hill country of Gilead. 24But **God came to Laban the Aramean in a dream by night, and said to him, "Take heed that you say not a word to Jacob, either good or bad."** NRSV

- **Jacob Vents**

When Jacob saw that Laban had no just cause to pursue him or inflict any damage on him and his family, he allowed himself to vent his anger to his uncle.

Even in venting, he was careful to be respectful. He only seemed to state his case clearly and forcefully without resorting to insult.

41These twenty years I have been in your house; I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock, and you have changed my wages ten times. 42If the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, had not been on my side, surely now you would have sent me away empty-handed. God saw my affliction and the labor of my hands, and rebuked you last night."

- **Laban & Jacob Make a Covenant**

At Laban's suggestion (31:43-54) he and Jacob made a covenant to keep their distance from each other (31:51-52)

- **Genesis 32 Jacob's Preparation for Esau, Spiritual Wrestling, Name Change**

In this chapter, we see two major events. The first is Jacob's preparation for meeting and reconciling with Esau. And the second is the famous event in which he wrestled all night with an angelic being.

- **Angels Meet Jacob**

32:1Jacob went on his way and the angels of God met him; 2and when Jacob saw them he said, "This is God's camp!" So he called that place Mahanaim.
NRSV

This happened soon after the covenant with Laban. It must have been God affirming Jacob.

- **Preparation to Meet Esau**

Jacob knew that Esau must still be hurting from what had happened between them and over the blessing that Isaac was deceived to pass to Jacob. He was clearly determined to be reconciled with his brother but also fearful of what might happen to his family.

- **Messengers Sent to Esau**
- **Time Spent in Prayer**
- **Three Gift Lots Prepared for Esau**

- **All Night Prayer Time/Wrestles with Divine Being**

- **Jacob Alone**

31:22The same night he got up and took his two wives, his two maids, and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. 23He took them and sent them across the stream, and likewise everything that he had.

24Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until daybreak

There are situations where we need to be by ourselves with God. This was one such situation.

- **Jacob Prevails - Great Picture of Prevailing Prayer**

25When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he struck him on the hip socket; and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. 26Then he said, "Let me go, for the day is breaking." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go, unless you bless me."

Jesus told the parable of the unjust judge to show that we should not give up in prayer:

"Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up."

- **Name Change to Israel**

27So he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." 28Then the man said, "You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans, and have prevailed."

The blessing Jacob got was a name change. God is big on names!

What names did we receive from the Lord when we became Christians?

- Child of God
- Righteous
- Blessed with Abraham
- HOMEWORK: identify some more ...

- **Genesis 33: Jacob & Esau Reconciliation**

Jacob approached Esau with humility and with gifts, deliberately humbling himself before Esau and clearly seeking reconciliation. Esau by this time was not poor either, but Jacob still offered gifts.

Some lessons:

- **Reconciliation Requires Humility**

33: 3He (Jacob) himself went on ahead of them, bowing himself to the ground seven times, until he came near his brother.

- **Generosity (of spirit and in kind)**

8Esau said, "What do you mean by all this company that I met?" Jacob answered, "To find favor with my lord."

11Please accept my gift that is brought to you, because God has dealt graciously with me, and because I have everything I want." So he urged him, and he took it.

- **Both Parties Must Be Willing**

33:4But Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept.

3. Daily Study Schedule & Questions

- **Day 1: Genesis 29:31- 30:23 Jacob's Household: Rivalry Between Wives, 13 Children**

As you read and study the verses, here are some suggestions of themes to reflect on - see the cross-references in other scripture:

- The challenges of a large household
- Is it unusual that the people of God disagree and have rivalries? What can you learn from how the matters were resolved in Jacob's household?
- What can we learn about self-esteem, and spiritual growth from the separate stories of Leah and Rachel

- **Day 2: Genesis 30:25-43 Jacob Increases in Wealth**

Suggested reflection themes:

- How did Jacob increase in wealth?
- What role did prayer play in this?
- How do we see the blessing of Isaac on Jacob at play in this?
- Did Jacob have to work for his increase? How?
- The role of divine guidance in Jacob's wealth increase

- **Day 3: Genesis 31: Jacob & Laban's Showdown, God's Intervention, Peaceful Parting**

Suggested reflection themes:

- The causes of the rift between Jacob and Laban
- How did God intervene?
- How did they resolve the matter and what can we learn from that?
- What is the importance of boundaries (the key to the covenant between Laban and Jacob), and how does that apply to us?

- **Day 4: Genesis 32 Jacob's Preparation for Esau, Spiritual Wrestling, Name Change**

Suggested reflection themes:

- How Jacob prepared for his upcoming confrontation
- Jacob's posture: adversarial or humility before God and man?
- How Jacob prayed and what we can learn from that
- The importance of persistent prayer and what we can learn from Jacob's example

- **Day 5: Genesis 33: Jacob & Esau Reconciliation**

Suggested reflection themes

- How the reconciliation came about
- Who initiated the reconciliation and why
- What it took for the reconciliation to happen
- The role of humility, patience, generosity, and willingness in reconciliation
- The role of prayer and dependence on God
- Is there any situation where you need reconciliation? How are you going to achieve it