



Leah and Rachel

Unusual Women in the Bible Zoom Bible Study

June 28, 2022

Review

Has your understanding or opinion of this story changed after our lesson last week? Do you see a “winner” or a “loser” in this story?

Now the story continues.

Genesis 30:1 – 13

When Rachel saw that she was not bearing Jacob any children, she became jealous of her sister. So she said to Jacob, “Give me children, or I’ll die!”

² Jacob became angry with her and said, “Am I in the place of God, who has kept you from having children?”

³ Then she said, “Here is Bilhah, my servant. Sleep with her so that she can bear children for me and I too can build a family through her.”

⁴ So she gave him her servant Bilhah as a wife. Jacob slept with her, ⁵ and she became pregnant and bore him a son. ⁶ Then Rachel said, “God has vindicated me; he has listened to my plea and given me a son.” Because of this she named him Dan.

⁷ Rachel’s servant Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son. ⁸ Then Rachel said, “I have had a great struggle with my sister, and I have won.” So she named him Naphtali.

⁹ When Leah saw that she had stopped having children, she took her servant Zilpah and gave her to Jacob as a wife. ¹⁰ Leah’s servant Zilpah bore Jacob a son. ¹¹ Then Leah said, “What good fortune!” So she named him Gad.

¹² Leah’s servant Zilpah bore Jacob a second son. ¹³ Then Leah said, “How happy I am! The women will call me happy.” So she named him Asher.

Here we see the same pattern we saw with Sarah—these women both decide to “do it their way.”

Now Rachel is jealous of Leah and Leah is jealous of Rachel.

How prevalent is our tendency to compare ourselves and/or our situations with others and feel as though we’ve been cheated?

John 21:18 – 22:

¹⁸ Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.” ¹⁹ Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, “Follow me!”

²⁰ Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. (This was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and had said, “Lord, who is going to betray you?”) ²¹ When Peter saw him, he asked, “Lord, what about him?”

²² Jesus answered, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me.

Whenever you allow yourself—your thoughts—to go into comparative mode, you will end up in one of two wrong places: 1) You will think of yourself more highly than you should or 2) you will think you have been short-changed; you are not good enough or smart enough or beautiful enough.

What has happened to the relationship between Rachel and Jacob?

Jacob informs Rachel that it is God who has closed her womb, and he is not God. That certainly was true, but his words were of no comfort or encouragement to Rachel.

Relationships always suffer when we take matters into our own hands. Anger and bitterness and resentment and jealousy always spill over to the other people in our lives.

Rachel insists that Jacob sleep with Bilhah, her servant, so she could build a family through her. This was the surrogate-mother relationship that was common in those days because of the disgrace for a woman to be barren.

When Bilhah gives birth to a son, Rachel claims she has been vindicated. Being vindicated means you have been proven to be right or justified.

Jacob sleeps with Bilhah again and she bears him another son. Now Rachel declares herself the winner.

Can you even imagine the dissention, the bitterness, the anger that has arisen in this family as a result of all this manipulation and jealousy? What are they teaching their children through their behavior?

This is how generational harm is passed down from one generation to another. But the good news is, someone could break that cycle of generational sin and harm if one person would decide not to pass it down. Have you seen this happen in families today?

Jealousy is a destructive emotion:

Proverbs 27:4: Anger is cruel and fury overwhelming, but who can stand before jealousy?

Have you ever had a situation where someone was very jealous of you? Did they try to cause you harm?

Not to be outdone, Leah gives her servant, Zilpah, to Jacob and she bore him two more sons. So, this competition between Rachel and Leah and their servants is going on for quite a long time.

Genesis 30:14 - 21

During wheat harvest, Reuben went out into the fields and found some mandrake plants, which he brought to his mother Leah. Rachel said to Leah, "Please give me some of your son's mandrakes."

¹⁵ But she said to her, "Wasn't it enough that you took away my husband? Will you take my son's mandrakes too?" "Very well," Rachel said, "he can sleep with you tonight in return for your son's mandrakes."

¹⁶ So when Jacob came in from the fields that evening, Leah went out to meet him. "You must sleep with me," she said. "I have hired you with my son's mandrakes." So he slept with her that night.

¹⁷ God listened to Leah, and she became pregnant and bore Jacob a fifth son. ¹⁸ Then Leah said, "God has rewarded me for giving my servant to my husband." So she named him Issachar.

¹⁹ Leah conceived again and bore Jacob a sixth son. ²⁰ Then Leah said, "God has presented me with a precious gift. This time my husband will treat me with honor, because I have borne him six sons." So she named him Zebulun.

²¹ Some time later she gave birth to a daughter and named her Dinah.

First, identify the wrong attitudes and actions you find in this passage.

The mandrake is a root, called the *love apple* in Hebrew. They were thought to increase fertility in women. Rachel bargains with Leah to give her some of the mandrakes.

Proverbs 30:15b - 16

“There are three things that are never satisfied, four that never say, ‘Enough!’: ¹⁶ the grave, the barren womb, land, which is never satisfied with water, and fire, which never says, ‘Enough!’

Giving birth to children was more important to Rachel and Leah than anything else; it became their idol.

If one of these women had been willing to give up her “rights,” to try to make peace, to give up her resentment and her pride, much of this could have been avoided. If Jacob had stepped in and been the man he should have been, much of this could have been avoided.



Romans 6:12 - 14

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. ¹³ Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness. ¹⁴ For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.

- How do you know when something is “reigning” in your body?
- What are some sins that could “reign” in your mortal body?
- What parts of yourself could you offer to sin as an instrument of wickedness?
- What are the steps you need to take to keep sin from reigning in you?

God listens to Leah and answers her prayer and she gives birth to sons number five and six, and then finally to a girl. Notice that God cared about Leah because she was unloved.

Genesis 29:31: When the LORD saw that Leah was not loved, he enabled her to conceive, but Rachel remained childless.

Psalms 34:18: The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

Are you in that brokenhearted condition? Has your spirit been crushed? Can you believe that the Lord is especially close to you because he understands your hurt? He hurts with you. He longs to be gracious to you.

Genesis 30:22 - 24

Then God remembered Rachel; he listened to her and enabled her to conceive. ²³ She became pregnant and gave birth to a son and said, “God has taken away my disgrace.” ²⁴ She named him Joseph, and said, “May the LORD add to me another son.”

Genesis 35:16 – 20

Then they moved on from Bethel. While they were still some distance from Ephrath, Rachel began to give birth and had great difficulty. ¹⁷ And as she was having great difficulty in childbirth, the midwife said to her, “Don’t despair, for you have another son.” ¹⁸ As she breathed her last—for she was dying—she named her son Ben-Oni. But his father named him Benjamin.

¹⁹ So Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem). ²⁰ Over her tomb Jacob set up a pillar, and to this day that pillar marks Rachel’s tomb.

Lessons from Rachel and Leah’s story:

- God’s definition of beauty is different than ours.
- God didn’t make every woman—every person—equally beautiful physically.
- Physical beauty or lack thereof doesn’t affect God’s plans.
- More beauty doesn’t mean fewer problems.
- Jealousy is deadly.
- God never gives up on us.
- God sees us when we hurt and he understands.

Leah wanted to be loved and pursued like Rachel was. It never happened for her.

Where or to whom are you looking to find your completeness? What are you expecting to give you fulfillment, contentment, satisfaction? Anything less than Jesus will disappoint you.