

The One You Love

Scripture: Genesis 29:13-35

In this passage, Laban learns that Jacob is his sister's son. He takes in his nephew and, after a month, offers him work in exchange for pay. Jacob serves Laban for seven years in exchange for his younger daughter, Rachel. However, on their wedding night, Laban tricks Jacob by taking his older daughter, Leah, to him, and tells him that it is customary in his country for the older daughter to marry off first. So Jacob works another seven years for Laban in exchange for Rachel. When the Lord saw that Leah was unloved, He caused her to conceive four sons.

Expectations vs. Reality

After a month of staying with his family, Laban asks his nephew what he wants as payment in exchange for working for him. This is a generous offer, considering that Jacob was flat broke at the time. Revealing his wage of choice gives us an idea of what is important to Jacob.

Considering the average price for a bride at this time, Jacob technically only had to work a year and a half, but because he loved Rachel he promised to work seven years in exchange for her. He did not even try to bargain. Upon realizing this, Laban says in Genesis 29:19, ***It is better that I give her to you than that I should give her to any other man; stay with me.*** He doesn't give a firm "yes" to this deal, but instead gives Jacob a false promise.

Genesis 29:20 says that the seven years Jacob worked in exchange for Rachel ***seemed to him but a few days because of his love he had for her.*** Rather than as a person, he loves Rachel as an idea, an idea of a wife that would help fulfill God's promise to him in Genesis 28:14 of offspring as many as the dust of the earth. Upon completing the seven years, Jacob demands for his Laban to give him his wife. Here, we see Jacob being forceful about getting Rachel, because to him it's not just about finding a wife; what's on the line here is his purpose in life, his value based on the promise of God. In this passage, we essentially see Jacob taking God's promise into his own hands and doing things his own way.

Apart from his initial reaction when Laban's deceit sets in, there is a distinct lack of reaction on Jacob's part when his reality doesn't meet his expectations. Why? Laban's response in Genesis 29:26—***"It is not so done in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn"***—struck a chord with Jacob, who, had previously deceived his father into giving him the blessing that was intended for his older brother.

The One You Love

Caught in a marriage based on unreciprocated love. Leah constantly tries to earn Jacob's approval to find her value. This is nothing new to her, as her entire life has essentially been an "affliction" due to constant comparison between her and her younger—and more favored—sister. Even in her introduction in the Bible, Leah is shown as someone who gets the short end of the stick. ***Leah's eyes were weak, but Rachel was beautiful in form and appearance,*** according to Genesis 29:17. This would carry over even in her marriage, as she would be forced to live with the woman that her husband has already decided he loves more. Leah's situation shows the danger that can come when we place our value on other people: it's ever enough.

The One Who Loves You

The Lord will allow trials to come into the lives of believers, as is the case with Leah. After Leah bore her fourth son, she said in Genesis 29:35, **“This time I will praise the LORD.”** In this context, the name of the Lord is written in all capitals, signifying that it is the covenant, personal name of God. Only people who have a personal relationship with God uses the Lord’s name that way, so we can infer that Leah at this point has this type of relationship with Him.





As much as the Lord allows hardships to befall on believers, He will also allow for blessings to come to them. In Leah’s case, although she lived her entire life in “affliction,” she received blessing by way of her four sons. However, we must remember that the order (of blessings and hardships) is not always the same, nor should we think that blessings are *supposed* to come after trials.

Romans 8:28-29 says, **And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.** People tend to use this verse out of context, to support the idea that God will bless them at the end of whatever affliction they are going through. However, according to Tim Keller, “God does not promise to bless Christians by removing suffering, but to bless Christians *through* suffering. Jesus suffered not so that we might not suffer, but so that in our suffering, we would become more like Him.” If we look at the preceding verse through the context of Keller’s quote, we would see that Romans 8:28-29 is not for those who do not have a relationship with Christ, as it says that our suffering is meant for us in the end to develop Christ-like character.

At the end of Genesis 29, Leah finally stops placing her value and looking for love in her husband, and understands that she already has somebody who *does* love her: When the Lord saw the Leah was hated, *He loved her*. Leah’s story is significant because it is through her, particularly through her fourth son, Judah, that God’s promise to Abraham is fulfilled.

APPLICATION:

Patently listen as God reveals where you can apply the passage’s lesson in your life. Write down specific action points to what He has revealed to you.

	Personal: Expectations vs Reality. Are there things that you are expecting, things that you want that is not yet a reality to you? Make a list of these expectations? What does Romans 8:28-29 mean to you?
	Family: What are the things that you love as a family? Do these things reflect Jesus in your life? How do you respond/ react when you cannot get, attain the one you love?
	Discipleship: Discuss with your discipleship group if there are expectations that still get the better of you. How can you deal with these expectations – are they realistic or unrealistic? Are they in line with God’s plan for you?
	Church/ Ministry: In the light of all that is happening in the world today, how am I actively and intentionally sharing the gospel to those who are around me?

PRAYERS:

Lift all the things that you learned back to God. Share your thoughts to Him. If He is impressing a sin in your life, confess it to Him. He is always ready to forgive.