

## Genesis 29

### Pray for your time together in God's Word!

Study Summary: This study examines the historical account of Laban deceiving Jacob in his quest for a wife. The materials explore connections we can make in light of the reality and consequences of living in a sinful world where suffering, deception and selfish gain exist.

*Leader's Note: If your group is familiar with the passages leading up to Genesis 29, you may ask them to recap what has happened in Jacob's life. Alternatively you may read the passage below:*

**Tell the group:** Genesis 29 is the story of Jacob looking for and finding a wife from among his people. In the chapters leading up to Genesis 29, a lot has happened in Jacob's life:

- His father Isaac is furious with him because of his deception (27:33)
- His brother Esau wants to kill him (27:41)
- He must "flee" and leave his entire family abruptly (27:43)
- His journey is long and dangerous (28:20-21)

**Ask the Group:** What do you think Jacob's state of mind and heart were as he was on his journey to find a wife?

*Possible answers: He was probably fearful, felt alone, unsure of what the future would hold.*

- **Ask the Group:** When have you experienced similar emotions?

**Read verses 1-30 out loud as a group. Option: Give group 2 minutes to look at the passage on their own.**

Genesis 29:1-30 (NIV)

1 Then Jacob continued on his journey and came to the land of the eastern peoples. 2 There he saw a well in the open country, with three flocks of sheep lying near it because the flocks were watered from that well. The stone over the mouth of the well was large. 3 When all the flocks were gathered there, the shepherds would roll the stone away from the well's mouth and water the sheep. Then they would return the stone to its place over the mouth of the well. 4 Jacob asked the shepherds, "My brothers, where are you from?" "We're from Haran," they replied. 5 He said to them, "Do you know Laban, Nahor's grandson?" "Yes, we know him," they answered. 6 Then Jacob asked them, "Is he well?" "Yes, he is," they said, "and here comes his daughter Rachel with the sheep." 7 "Look," he said, "the sun is still high; it is not time for the flocks to be gathered. Water the sheep and take them back to pasture." 8 "We can't," they replied, "until all the flocks are gathered and the stone has been rolled away from the mouth of the well. Then we

will water the sheep.” 9 While he was still talking with them, Rachel came with her father’s sheep, for she was a shepherd. 10 When Jacob saw Rachel daughter of his uncle Laban, and Laban’s sheep, he went over and rolled the stone away from the mouth of the well and watered his uncle’s sheep. 11 Then Jacob kissed Rachel and began to weep aloud. 12 He had told Rachel that he was a relative of her father and a son of Rebekah. So she ran and told her father.

13 As soon as Laban heard the news about Jacob, his sister’s son, he hurried to meet him. He embraced him and kissed him and brought him to his home, and there Jacob told him all these things. 14 Then Laban said to him, “You are my own flesh and blood.”

After Jacob had stayed with him for a whole month, 15 Laban said to him, “Just because you are a relative of mine, should you work for me for nothing? Tell me what your wages should be.”

16 Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the older was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. 17 Leah had weak eyes, but Rachel had a lovely figure and was beautiful. 18 Jacob was in love with Rachel and said, “I’ll work for you seven years in return for your younger daughter Rachel.”

19 Laban said, “It’s better that I give her to you than to some other man. Stay here with me.”

20 So Jacob served seven years to get Rachel, but they seemed like only a few days to him because of his love for her.

21 Then Jacob said to Laban, “Give me my wife. My time is completed, and I want to make love to her.”

22 So Laban brought together all the people of the place and gave a feast. 23 But when evening came, he took his daughter Leah and brought her to Jacob, and Jacob made love to her. 24 And Laban gave his servant Zilpah to his daughter as her attendant.

25 When morning came, there was Leah! So Jacob said to Laban, “What is this you have done to me? I served you for Rachel, didn’t I? Why have you deceived me?”

26 Laban replied, “It is not our custom here to give the younger daughter in marriage before the older one. 27 Finish this daughter’s bridal week; then we will give you the younger one also, in return for another seven years of work.”

28 And Jacob did so. He finished the week with Leah, and then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel to be his wife. 29 Laban gave his servant Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as her attendant. 30 Jacob made love to Rachel also, and his love for Rachel was greater than his love for Leah. And he worked for Laban another seven years.

**Ask the Group:** Laban deceived Jacob and outrightly went back on his promise by giving Leah, not Rachel, in marriage. If you were Jacob, how do you think you would respond?

*Possible Answers: Rage, bitterness, disbelief, deeply hurt, deep sense of being wronged*

- **Ask the Group:** How does our culture tell us to respond when we’re taken advantage of? What does it tell us to think or do?

*Possible Answers: Feel sorry for yourself, seek revenge/take advantage in return, try to come out on top in other ways (acquire stuff, have certain positions), harbor anger or bitterness.*

- **Ask the Group:** Has there been a time when you felt you were taken advantage of or wronged in some way? What was your reaction?

**Optional Transition:** Jacob had assurances of God's promises and faithfulness given to him, and likewise, believers in Christ have God's promises through the gospel. We're going to look at a New Testament passage that describes the future hope God promises to believers, and consider how this affects our experiences of being wronged or taken advantage of.

**Read the passage out loud as a group:**

Revelation 21: 1-5

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. 2 I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 4 He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." 5 He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. 7 He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son.

Revelation 22: 1-6

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb 2 down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. 3 No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. 4 They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. 5 There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever. 6 The angel said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place."

**Ask the Group:** What promises does God assure believers of here?

*Possible Answers: Being eternally present with God, the ultimate removal of the presence and effects of sin, a new and perfect life experience, no sorrow or wrongdoing, no curse, guarantee of our future inheritance, seeing God face to face and eternally praising and serving him*

**Ask the Group:** How can this full picture of the gospel (present salvation and future hope) inform how we as believers respond when we are wronged?

*Possible Answers: The promise of our eternity with Christ allows us to endure and embrace hardship because we know that our ultimate satisfaction and joy is not on this earth; we are promised a future without sin so we don't despair when we suffer the effects of it now; we can hold loosely to the things of this life in anticipation of the future glory awaiting us*

- **Ask the Group:** What makes it hard for you to have a gospel-directed response to mistreatment?

*Possible Answers: Our desire to be right or to get what we want, a sense of entitlement to earthly justice, the reality of hurt or anger because of mistreatment*

**Read Genesis 29 verses 31-35 out loud as a group. Option: Give group 2 minutes to look at the passage on their own.**

31 When the Lord saw that Leah was not loved, he enabled her to conceive, but Rachel remained childless. 32 Leah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Reuben, for she said, "It is because the Lord has seen my misery. Surely my husband will love me now."

33 She conceived again, and when she gave birth to a son she said, "Because the Lord heard that I am not loved, he gave me this one too." So she named him Simeon.

34 Again she conceived, and when she gave birth to a son she said, "Now at last my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons." So he was named Levi.

35 She conceived again, and when she gave birth to a son she said, "This time I will praise the Lord." So she named him Judah. Then she stopped having children.

**Ask the Group:** What was Leah's response to her situation in verses 31-34?

*Possible Answers: Attempting to earn her husband's love through bearing him children, potentially despairing in her hardship, overvaluing her husband's love*

**Ask the Group:** How does her response change in verse 35? What does the naming of her son Judah indicate about her perspective on her hardship?

*Possible Answers: Initially she was seeking satisfaction in the love of her husband and attempting to earn it by bearing him children. With the birth of Judah, she declares that her fulfillment in God*

**Ask the Group:** Leah's desire to be loved by her husband was good. But we all, like her, face the temptation to turn good things into things of ultimate importance. When in your life do you think, "If only \_\_\_\_\_, then I would be \_\_\_\_\_."

*Possible answers: If only I had a boyfriend/girlfriend/husband/wife, then I wouldn't be lonely. If only I made more money, then I'd feel secure. If only I had a good job, I would have the respect of others. If only I could get that car/those shoes/etc. then I would make a good impression on others. If only I could get college behind me, then I'd feel less stressed. If only I had an awesome skill, then I'd feel satisfied and proud.*

- **Ask the Group:** What wrong beliefs about the gospel may be at the root of these thoughts?

**Ask the Group:** In verse 35, Leah turns to the Lord and experiences satisfaction and contentment in Him, in the midst of her hardships. Where do you need to finally stop and say, "I will praise the Lord?"

*Possible answers: This could apply to any area of one's life: possessions, relationships, stage of life, accomplishments, etc.*

**Ask the Group:** What is our community application of this passage?

*Possible answer: How can we help one another keep our eyes fixed on Jesus instead of traveling off towards something else?*

*Leaders' Note: You may choose to create your own application question as a group based on your discussion, or highlight a question from this study.*