

Genesis 29:1-30
God Provides a Wife for Jacob

Some of you may be familiar with working on a farm

- Others of you may not have had that exposure

Growing up, my maternal grandparents were farmers

- They had some acreage where they would plant various crops
- I would sometimes help them with various responsibilities

I remember one time helping them with planting seeds for the coming crop

- My grandfather gave me this contraption that looked like a backpack
- In actuality, this contraption was used to sow seeds

Someone would fill up the pouch with seeds and tell me to turn a handle as I walked

- In turning that handle, the seeds would be distributed in a short radius

The seeds went everywhere

- Birds would eat some of the seed
- Other seed would not be productive
- But some seed would grow into the crops for the coming season

Over the past few chapters of Genesis, we have seen Jacob sowing seeds

- Seeds of deception
- Seeds of dishonesty
- Seeds of trickery

At the time, it didn't seem like anything would happen

- Jacob tempted Esau out of his birthright
- Jacob deceived his father to obtain Esau's blessing

But the principle of sowing and reaping would come around to Jacob

- His sins would find him out
- God would not allow him to get away with his sins

Let's read Genesis 29:1-30

Your bulletin states that we will cover verses 1-20

- However, late in the week, I decided to go through verse 30

These 30 verses of Genesis 29 tell us about two (2) essential truths of God's working in our lives

- God guides His people (29:1-14)
- God provides for His people (29:15-30)

I. God guides His people (29:1-14)

Then Jacob went on his journey, and came to the land of the sons of the east.

In the last part of Genesis 28, we saw how Jacob was making his way to Haran in order to find a wife

- But Jacob needed to meet God before he met a wife

We saw how God made Himself known to Jacob in a dream

- A ladder symbolized access to heaven from earth
- Angels illustrated God's continual dealings with mankind
- God's own presence reassured Jacob of His promise, presence, and protection

In response to this dream, Jacob responded appropriately

- He realized that God's presence was with him
- He consecrated the place as the very "house of God"
- He took a vow to display his trust in God

The rest of the trip to Haran is passed over in silence

- We are left to our best guess as to what took place over the remainder of the journey

But finally, Jacob "came to the land of the sons of the east"

- Elsewhere in Genesis, to travel "east" is to travel away from the land of Canaan
- This makes sense in our passage this morning, since Jacob is traveling to Haran – away from the Promised Land

He is a man on a mission

- To find a wife

² And he looked, and saw a well in the field, and behold, three flocks of sheep were lying there beside it, for from that well they watered the flocks. Now the stone on the mouth of the well was large.

When he arrives in Haran, the first thing that he notices is "a well in the field"

- This isn't the first time that we have seen reference to a well

On two occasions, Hagan was sitting by a well (16:14; 21:19)

- There were disputes over wells (21:25, 30; 26:19-22)

Perhaps the biggest comparison to our present passage is Genesis 24

- Abraham sends his servant to Haran in order to find a wife for Isaac
- The first thing that he notices when he enters town is a well (24:11)

There are many comparisons between Genesis 24 and 29

- We will highlight some of these as we go through the passage

Not only does Jacob recognize a well

- He recognizes "three flocks of sheep were lying there beside it"

This was a strange sight, especially to Jacob

- Why were these three flocks of sheep just lying around?
- Why weren't they grazing?

Jacob also recognizes “**the stone on the mouth of the well was large**”

- This type of well didn’t have a steady stream of running water
- It had a huge stone that needed to be removed in order to obtain water for the flocks

Since the rock was so large, it stands to reason that it took many shepherds to move it

³ When all the flocks were gathered there, they would then roll the stone from the mouth of the well, and water the sheep, and put the stone back in its place on the mouth of the well.

It would be a waste for the stone to be moved several times in a day

- The shepherds would wait for everyone to gather together
- Then they could remove the stone, allow the flocks to drink water, and then move the stone back

This would conserve time and energy

- No use in doing extra work, especially in the heat of the day

⁴ And Jacob said to them, “My brothers, where are you from?” And they said, “We are from Haran.” ⁵ And he said to them, “Do you know Laban the son of Nahor?” And they said, “We know *him*.” ⁶ And he said to them, “Is it well with him?” And they said, “It is well, and behold, Rachel his daughter is coming with the sheep.”

Although he is a bit perplexed at the attitude of the shepherds, Jacob greets them

- To refer them as “**brothers**” was a polite gesture

What follows in verses 5 & 6 is a series of three short questions

- The shepherds respond with three short answers

The first question from Jacob is, “**where are you from?**”

- They respond that they are from Haran

This is great news!

- This is the final destination!

The second question from Jacob is, “**Do you know Laban the son of Nahor?**”

- They respond that they do know him

The third question from Jacob is, “**Is it well with him?**”

- They respond that things are well with him

Then the shepherds tell Jacob, “**behold, Rachel his daughter is coming with the sheep**”

- Even better news, right?

After all, Jacob has traveled all this way to find a wife

- He just hears three precious words, “**Rachel his daughter**”

⁷ And he said, “Behold, it is still high day; it is not time for the livestock to be gathered. Water the sheep, and go, pasture them.” ⁸ But they said, “We cannot, until all the flocks are gathered, and they roll the stone from the mouth of the well; then we water the sheep.”

Jacob immediately tells the shepherds how to do their job

- Imagine a total stranger walking up to you and telling you how to do your job
- That is exactly what Jacob does with these shepherds!

Jacob knows what he is doing

- He wants some private time with this daughter of Laban¹
- But he can't have private time with her if these other shepherds are still around

But the shepherds tell Jacob, “We cannot, until all the flocks are gathered, and they roll the stone from the mouth of the well; then we water the sheep”

- All the flocks had not been gathered
- These three shepherds were at the well waiting in line

Notice also what the shepherds say, “they roll the stone from the mouth of the well”

- Perhaps these shepherds were too young
- Perhaps these shepherds were not strong enough to roll the stone away

So there is a problem

- These shepherds can't do anything until someone rolls away the stone

⁹ While he was still speaking with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep, for she was a shepherdess. ¹⁰ And it came about, when Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother's brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother's brother, that Jacob went up, and rolled the stone from the mouth of the well, and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother.

While Jacob is engaged in a dialogue with these three shepherds, “Rachel came with her father's sheep, for she was a shepherdess”

- This is Jacob's first meeting with Rachel

It would not have been totally out of the ordinary for a woman to be a shepherdess

- In some cases, a father didn't have any sons
- So the daughters would have to do the work

But in this case, we know that Laban had sons (30:35; 31:1)

- Nevertheless, Rachel was doing the hard work of shepherding

When Jacob saw Rachel, he does something amazing

- Singlehandedly, he rolls the stone away from the well
- Then he waters the flock of Laban

This was love at first sight!²

¹ Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record*, 457.

² W.H. Griffith-Thomas, *Genesis: A Devotional Commentary*, 270.

I believe that Jacob wanted to impress Rachel with his strength

- If three shepherds couldn't roll the stone away, this shows you how much strength was needed in order to move this huge boulder

We all want to make a good first impression, don't we?

- Jacob certainly did

It is good to see Jacob mature and act on his own

- He has done what his mother has told him up to this point

But Rebekah isn't around

- So he must make his own decisions

¹¹ Then Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted his voice and wept. ¹² And Jacob told Rachel that he was a relative of her father and that he was Rebekah's son, and she ran and told her father.

Verses 11-12 may take us a little off guard

- There is a bit of humor involved as well

After moving the stone and watering Laban's sheep, Jacob "kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice and wept"

- Ladies, how would you respond if a total stranger did that to you?
- Seems a little odd, doesn't it?

In some cultures, it is perfectly acceptable – and sometimes expected – for you to kiss your relatives

- But a total stranger?

Only after kissing Rachel and weeping does Jacob tell her who he is

- He was related to her
- "he was Rebekah's son"

Imagine the shock that Rachel must have felt

- Now Jacob's actions make sense
- Now his kiss wasn't so out-of-place

What does Rachel do next?

- She runs to tell her father

This is very similar to how Rebekah responded to Abraham's servant in Genesis 24:28, "Then the girl ran and told her mother's household about these things"

- Both Rachel and Rebekah run back home to tell their families what had happened

Undoubtedly, Rachel is just as excited about Jacob as he is about her

¹³ So it came about, when Laban heard the news of Jacob his sister's son, that he ran to meet him, and embraced him and kissed him, and brought him to his house. Then he related to Laban all these things.

Rachel's father Laban hears the news about Jacob

- This is his nephew who he has never met!

Laban runs out to meet Jacob “**and embraced him and kissed him**”

- There was a mutual sense of love and connection
- This was uncle and nephew!

Laban then brings Jacob back to his house

Verse 13 ends with the statement, “**then he (Jacob) related to Laban all these things**”

- What a mouthful this is!

How much did Jacob tell Laban?

- Did Jacob tell him about his deception of Esau on two occasions?
- Did Jacob tell him about Esau’s intent to kill him?
- Did Jacob tell him about the dream that he had in Bethel?

We don’t know

- But whatever he told Laban would and could be used against him in the near future

Jacob had no idea of the character of Laban

- Jacob would meet his match in this man³

¹⁴ And Laban said to him, “Surely you are my bone and my flesh.” And he stayed with him a month.

We don’t know how much time elapsed

- We don’t know how long they talked

I am sure that Laban wanted to know how his sister Rebekah was doing

- One commentator suggests that it had been 97 years since Rebekah left with Abraham’s servant⁴

But Laban exclaims, “**Surely you are my bone and my flesh**”

- Laban realizes the family resemblance
- Perhaps Jacob even looked similar from a physical standpoint

The last time that we have seen a reference to “**bone**” and “**flesh**” was in Genesis 2:23

- In that passage, Adam realized that God had made a fitting and suitable helper for him
- He had a companion that was right for him

Laban uses this expression to indicate the close family ties that exist between them

- This is his sister’s son

God has guided Jacob

- All the way from Haran, God has protected him and assured him of His presence

God has promised to guide us as well

- As we look to Him and trust Him, He will guide us in the paths of righteousness
- His presence will be with us, just as it was with Jacob

³ Derek Kidner, *Tyndale OT Commentaries, Genesis*, 159.

⁴ Leon J. Wood, *A Shorter Commentary on Genesis*, 105.

God's providential guidance in our lives is one of the most exciting things to behold⁵

- It was for Jacob
- And it is for us as well

I wish the story ended on this happy note

- I would love to tell you that Jacob and Rachel were married and lived happily ever after

But things seldom end that way

- Only in the fairy tale world of make believe

This time in Jacob's life is about to expose some of his earlier sin

- The seeds of deception are starting to grow
- Jacob will soon realize how it hurts to be deceived by a close family member

Not only does God guide His people...

II. God provides for His people (29:15-30)

¹⁵ Then Laban said to Jacob, "Because you are my relative, should you therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what shall your wages be?"

Jacob had been with Laban for a month when uncle Laban asked Jacob about his wages

- No doubt Jacob had jumped in and helped with the family responsibilities

Laban asked Jacob what his wages should be

- Jacob was unlike any of the other servants and laborers
- Jacob was family – flesh and blood!

But this doesn't stop Laban from using the situation for his own selfish ends

- We will see his deception throughout this second half of the chapter

¹⁶ Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the older was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. ¹⁷ And Leah's eyes were weak, but Rachel was beautiful of form and face.

Moses gives us a bit of background to Laban's family

- He has two daughters
 - o The older sister was Leah
 - o The younger sister was Rachel

The issue of "older" and "younger" is a theme that we have seen emerge time and time again

- Esau was the older son
- Jacob was the younger son

Here we have the younger son, Jacob, in love with the younger sister, Rachel

- No doubt Laban was aware of Jacob's attraction to his younger daughter, Rachel

⁵ Gordon J. Wenham, *Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 2, 232.*

Verse 17 helps us to visualize the appearance of these two sisters

- Rachel was “beautiful of form and face”

She was beautiful

- And Jacob knew it!

Leah, on the other hand, had a noticeable imperfection

- The Text tells us that her eyes were “weak”
- Most likely, her eyes didn’t have the “fire” or sparkle that Rachel’s did⁶

There is definitely an implied contrast between Rachel and Leah

- The author is showing why Jacob chose Rachel over her older sister

¹⁸ Now Jacob loved Rachel, so he said, “I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel.”

What was assumed up to this point is clearly stated, “Jacob loved Rachel”

- There was a definite compassion and connection between these two individuals

Jacob loved Rachel so much that he desired marriage to her more than money

- Instead of asking for financial remuneration, Jacob asks for Rachel’s hand in marriage

Jacob tells Laban that he will give seven years of service in exchange for the privilege to marry Rachel

- This shows just how much Jacob is committed to marrying Rachel!

You may remember what Rebekeh had told Jacob prior to his leaving for Haran, “Stay with him (Laban) a few days, until your brother’s fury subsides” (27:44)

- Jacob has already been with Laban for a month
- Now he has pledged seven years of service in exchange for marriage to Rachel

I am sure that Jacob thinks he has everything figured out

- He will serve his seven years
- He will marry Rachel
- Then he will return back to Canaan where he will reunite with his mother

But things don’t work out that way

- Not as long as Laban has anything to do with it

¹⁹ And Laban said, “It is better that I give her to you than that I should give her to another man; stay with me.”

In response to Jacob’s request, Laban concedes that it would be better for him to give Rachel to a relative than to “another man”

- So there is an agreement to the terms
- Or so Jacob thinks

⁶ Wenham, 233.

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

The next seven years of service to Laban are passed over in silence

- The intended effect of this is to show Jacob's determination to marry Rachel
- It is also intended to show that his love for Rachel far exceeded any physical labor involved

These seven years seemed to Jacob "but a few days because of his love for her"

I am sure that these seven years passed by very quickly

- He had the privilege of working for Rachel's father
- No doubt, he saw Rachel every day during these seven years
- The sense of anticipation was very high!

Then Jacob said to Laban, "Give me my wife, for my time is completed, that I may go in to her."

At the end of seven years, Jacob initiates conversation with Laban and says, "Give me my wife, for my time is completed"

- This seems to be more of a command than a request

Perhaps Laban had not wanted this day to come

- No doubt Jacob had proven himself to be a good helper around the house

Perhaps also Laban realized that Jacob would return to Canaan

- Not only would he lose his helper
- He would also lose his daughter

He had said good-bye to his sister many years ago

- The pain of separation must have been hard to deal with

Jacob tells Laban that he had served his seven years in exchange for Rachel

- And he tells Laban that he wants to get married "that I may go in to her"

Jacob realizes that marriage is the place for sexual fulfillment to take place

- The author makes it clear that these two lovers had kept themselves pure during these seven years
- This is an amazing testimony to God's grace in their lives

²² And Laban gathered all the men of the place, and made a feast. ²³ Now it came about in the evening that he took his daughter Leah, and brought her to him; and Jacob went in to her. ²⁴ Laban also gave his maid Zilpah to his daughter Leah as a maid.

Nothing is said about Laban's response to Jacob

- Perhaps Laban responded and we are not told what he said
- We don't know

But we do know that the next thing that takes place is the preparation for a wedding

- All the men of the place gathered and there was a feast

As the reader of the Text, we know what happens next

- Laban plays the game of "bait and switch"

Jacob thinks that he is marrying Rachel

- In reality, he marries Leah

Verse 23 summarizes this event, “Now it came about in the evening that he took his daughter Leah, and brought her to him; and Jacob went in to her”

- If you are like me, you ask, “How could this happen? How could Jacob mistake Leah for Rachel?”

From our limited vantage point, here are a few suggestions

- The Text tells us that the wedding took place “in the evening”
 - o The darkness would have been a great time to pull off this deception
- In this day and age, brides wore veils which concealed most of the face
 - o Most of Leah’s face would have been concealed
- During a feast, it is entirely possible that Jacob had a little too much to drink
 - o I am sure that Laban wanted him to be as impaired as possible

Ultimately, we don’t know the answers to a lot of these issues

- We have to realize that God allowed this for His own purposes

As the father’s gift to the bride, Laban gave Zilpah the maid to Leah

- No doubt Zilpah would have been a huge help around the house

But the Text is very clear that Jacob and Leah consummated their marriage

- In the darkness of their bridal chamber, Jacob and Leah enjoyed the physical relationship within marriage

²⁵ So it came about in the morning that, behold, it was Leah! And he said to Laban, “What is this you have done to me? Was it not for Rachel that I served with you? Why then have you deceived me?”

As the reader, you can feel the suspense and drama of the moment

- I wish we could read this with new eyes to capture the tension

The morning after the wedding, a huge surprise awaits Jacob

- He had married Leah!

Imagine the shock this must have been!

- Imagine the rush of emotions that Jacob must have experienced

He immediately goes to Laban and asks three quick, terse questions

- “What is this you have done to me?”
- “Was it not for Rachel that I served with you?”
- “Why then have you deceived me?”

Jacob is a man with a lot of questions and few answers

- He knows that he has consummated the marriage
- He cannot back out of his marriage with Leah

You remember from verse 18 that Jacob loved Rachel

- Not Leah!

How did this make Leah feel?

- What part did she play in this deception?

On one hand, we feel for Jacob

- Yet on another hand, we think, “Hey! You get what you deserve! You had it coming!”

Just a few chapters earlier, Jacob had dressed up like Esau in order to deceive his father whose eyesight was failing

- Now Laban had taken advantage of Jacob in the dark of night

²⁶ But Laban said, “It is not the practice in our place, to marry off the younger before the first-born. ²⁷ Complete the week of this one, and we will give you the other also for the service which you shall serve with me for another seven years.”

Laban’s response to Jacob seems to be a bit callous and hardhearted

- He claims to have followed a custom to marry the firstborn before the other daughters

Don’t you think this would have been nice to know before Jacob married Leah?

- Perhaps other arrangements could have been made!

Of course, Laban is in the driver’s seat

- Jacob is used to getting what he wants
- Now he has met his match with Laban

So Jacob’s uncle tells him to finish the week of marriage celebration with Leah and then he can marry Rachel

- Oh yeah, Jacob must serve Laban for another seven years

Do you see how Jacob has played right into the hands of Laban?

- He has both daughters married off
- He has 14 years of service from Jacob⁷

Jacob the deceiver has been deceived

- The subject of deceit is now the object of deceit⁸
- The supplanter has been supplanted
- The mastermind has been outfoxed

²⁸ And Jacob did so and completed her week, and he gave him his daughter Rachel as his wife. ²⁹ Laban also gave his maid Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as her maid.

So Jacob celebrates the wedding celebration for Leah

- These must have been seven long days for him

At the end of the week, Jacob marries Rachel

- Now he has the woman that he loves

⁷ Kenneth A. Mathews, *NAC, Vol 1B*, 471.

⁸ Victor P. Hamilton, *NICOT, Genesis 18-50*, 262.

But he now has two wives

- Two sisters

Later in the Mosaic Law, a man would be forbidden from marrying two sisters who are alive at the same time (Lev 18:18)

- But at this point in Biblical revelation, this practice was not forbidden

Polygamy was definitely a breach of God's original intent for marriage back in Genesis 2

- It isn't the first time that we have seen the effects of sin in a marriage
- And it certainly wouldn't be the last!

Laban had given a maid to Leah as her wedding gift

- And he does the same thing for Rachel

³⁰ So Jacob went in to Rachel also, and indeed he loved Rachel more than Leah, and he served with Laban for another seven years.

Verse 30 tells us seven years of waiting has finally reached its desired effect

- Jacob and Rachel are husband and wife
- They can enjoy the physical relationship that is allowed in marriage

Once again, we are told of Jacob's love for Rachel

- As a matter of fact, Moses is clear that "**he loved Rachel more than Leah**"

This would be a problem

- Jealousy, bitterness, envy, and a host of others sins would be the result of these marriages

There had been favoritism between Rebekah and Jacob

- Now there would be favoritism between Jacob and Rachel over Leah⁹

Jacob served Laban for another seven years

- In total, he has served 14 years for Rachel
- But it was worth it

Jacob had learned a valuable lesson

- Deception hurts others

I am sure that he thought of how his own deception must have hurt Esau and Isaac

- God was teaching him a hard lesson

There is an expression that says, "**What goes around, comes around**"

- To put it Biblically, you reap what you sow

In the book of Galatians, the apostle Paul warns the believers, "**Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.** ⁸ **For the one who sows to his own flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap eternal life**" (Gal 6:7-8)

- These are strong words
- This should be a warning to all of us

⁹ Hamilton, 264.

Deception is fairly easy to pull off, if you think about it

- It is very easy to fool others
- It is easy to lie and cover the truth

But if you continue along that path of deception, you will meet your match one day

- God will allow the seeds of sin to sprout and grow
- Your sins will find you out!

Jacob had to live with the result of his sin

- He was married to two wives – two sisters

We will see next week how jealousy drove a wedge in this family

- Again, we will see a fractured family

But a greater deception awaits those who refuse to submit to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior

- What a day of shock and amazement to realize that one's entire life has been one big lie
- What a day of horror to realize that you will be punished eternally because of your refusal to trust in Christ

Sinner friend, I urge you to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ

- Don't allow Satan to deceive you any more

God is not mocked!

- You will reap what you sow!

Believer, don't think that you are immune from God's discipline

- Jacob wasn't!

“For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives” (Heb 12:6)

- If you are His child, you will be disciplined
- God will not allow you to live a life of perpetual disobedience without His hand of correction

Let's learn a lesson from Jacob

- It never pays to deceive
- It always pays to display integrity