


Messy Life:
The Story of Jacob
Part 8
A Story of Marriage and Deception

TALKING POINTS WALKINGPOINTS

Leader's Guide

2025-4-6



A publication of  DISCIPLE, the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. –Psalm 145:11
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. –Joshua 22:5

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

Observation—*What do I see?*

- 1 Jacob was on a journey (Genesis 29:1), but according to 27:35, 41-46, **why** was he on that journey?
- 2 Given that "back-story", would **you** expect God to bless him or not? Explain your reasoning.
- 3 Genesis 29:10-20 tells of his reception at journey's end. Does it portend prosperity or struggle?
- 4 What do we learn from the fact that for seven years it appears that Jacob has escaped all consequences of his deception? Now read Genesis 29:21-30. Formulate the principle flowing from these passages.

Interpretation—*What does it mean?*

- 5 From Romans 12:17–21, complete these two sentences:
"**Never** _____." and "**Always** _____."
- 6 Which of these positive and negative commands did Jacob or Laban break?
- 7 Look up "vengeance" at Dictionary.com. What do you learn?
- 8 According to Romans 12:19, **who** must **never** take their own revenge and **who promises** to do so?
- 9 What is the difference between "your own revenge" and "the wrath of God"?

Application—*What do I do with this?*

- 10 **Why** mustn't **we** take revenge? **Why must** God do so?
- 11 Think over your own life—do you want God's justice or his mercy—and why? (See James 2:13!)
- 12 Read Psalm 13. Make a list of what we **should** do when we're the recipients of others' evil actions.
- 13 Relate this list to the ones you made from Romans 12:17-21. How are you doing in this respect?

- 1 • Jacob deceitfully took away Esau's blessing (35)
 - Therefore Esau bore a grudge against Jacob and planned to kill him (41)
 - Their mom heard of this and plotted to protect Jacob, her favorite (42-45)
 - Rebekah grumbled to Isaac about her daughters-in-law (Esau's wives) and claimed to be suicidal if Jacob does likewise, so he needs to take a wife from among my kin in Mesopotamia (46)

2 "Absolutely not! He should get what he deserves! It's the law of karma!"

3 **Looks like he's in *Fat City!* Namely...**

- he arrived safely, at exactly the right location, his pretty, single cousin appeared, and he wept for joy (1-11)
- Rachel excitedly ran home, and Laban (the guy who makes decisions about who can marry Rachel) ran up and kissed Jacob, and rolls out the red carpet! (12-14)
- Laban offered Jacob a job and let him name his wages: Pretty Rachel! They inked the contract (15-20)

What could possibly go wrong?!

4 The Law of Sowing and Reaping guarantees that we will:

- reap **what** we sowed
 - reap **more than** we sowed
 - reap **later than** we sowed
- Any suggestion that we've escaped the consequences of the Law of Sowing and Reaping is merely an indication that "harvest time" hasn't yet arrived! Patience—it will!*

5 **Never:**

- pay back evil for evil to anyone
- take your own revenge
- provide for needy enemies
- be conquered by evil (by doing evil in return)

Always:

- respect what is right in the sight of all men
- do all you can to be at peace with all men
- leave room for the wrath of God
- conquer evil by doing good in return

6 Um, pretty much did all the things they shouldn't and none of the things they should.

7 Vengeance is the infliction of injury, harm, humiliation, or the like, on a person harmed you.

8 **We** must never. **God** promises that he always will.

- 9 • God's wrath is always 100% holy, informed, proportionate, and righteous. He is the Judge.
 - We are not the judge. We are not holy (we, like our enemy, are sinners), we are ignorant of mitigating factors, we tend to repay more than we received. In a word, our own revenge is not righteous.

- 10 • We mustn't because we, like he who offended against us, are guilty sinners.
 - We who have received mercy are obligated to extend mercy.
 - God must because righteousness requires justice.

11 Read James 2:13 and the answer becomes obvious!

- 12 • Ask God to see our pain and cry out to him for relief.
 - Ask God to strengthen/revive us (that's what "enlighten my eyes" means poetically—see 1 Samuel 14:29 and Ezra 9:8).
 - We should trust in God's covenant loyalty.
 - We should rejoice heartily in God's salvation.
 - We should sing to Yahweh because he's so good to us.

13 Lead your group in a comparison of these lists and how we're (honestly) doing in this domain.

Sermon Summary Genesis 29:1-30

I spoke earlier about the law of sowing and reaping, about how we eventually reap what we sow. Well, Jacob's time to reap has come! We are going to see it, up close and personal, in our text today (v. 1-30). At this point the Biblical narrator tells us, the reader, about a local custom Jacob didn't know about and which was the source of his confusion where he sees all these thirsty sheep near the well (v.3). Jacob didn't know about this custom, nor did he know any of these people. He is a stranger, newly arrived in town (v.4). So when he hears that these people are from Haran, this is really good news. He has finally arrived at his destination. But he doesn't know if his uncle still lives in these parts (v.5-6). Now while God is never mentioned in the passage today, it is clear that God is providentially guiding Jacob on this journey. Remember, Jacob is trying to find his uncle. These shepherds, whom he just happened to come across, know his uncle.

In verse 7 we see that although Jacob is unaware of this local watering custom, he is assuming control of the situation. For all the criticism we might level at Jacob's conduct, he was no slacker in his labor ethic (31:6, 38-41). His comment bristles with boldness. Three successive verbal imperatives thunder a presumptuous attitude, "water ... go ... pasture!" The first time Jacob became aware of the local watering custom was in v. 8. Apparently, the stone covering the well was very heavy. They waited around for all the local shepherds who used this well to gather, so they could get some help lifting the stone. Plus, this way, they only had to lift it once. Then Jacob sees Rachel with his uncle's sheep (v.9-10). You get the impression that Jacob, inspired by Rachel's beauty, and perhaps wanting to impress her, lifted the stone off the well all by himself and began to water her father's flock. Jacob then introduces himself to Rachel (v. 11-13).

Let me pause here and point out that there are a lot of similarities between this narrative where Jacob and Rachel meet and the narrative in Genesis 24 where Abraham's servant, who has been charged with finding a wife for his son, Isaac, first meets Rebecca at a well. I think we are supposed to notice these similarities. Just as God had directed Abraham's servant to Rebecca, so God had directed Jacob to Rachel. Upon learning that Jacob was a close relative, Rachel reacted in the same manner Rebekah had years earlier. She ran and told her household (24:28 and 29:12). That Rachel's response mimics Rebekah's gives a subtle authentication to Rachel as the mother of future Israel.

As we read in v. 14-15, apparently, Laban offered Jacob a job. But because Jacob is a relative, the wage thing is a little more complicated. He is neither a slave nor a typical hired laborer. At this point, the narrative provides some parenthetical information about Laban's daughters (v. 16-17). Jacob is captivated by Rachel and strikes a deal with Laban—seven years of work for the right to marry Rachel (v. 18-19). Jacob was broke so to pay the bride price he had to give "sweat equity". The story goes into "fast forward", and within one verse (20), we are seven years along. That's when the fiasco heats up (v. 20-25). Remember how we talked about the law of sowing and reaping? How what goes around comes around? That's what is happening here. Jacob was getting a dose of his own medicine. Jacob, the deceiver, was deceived! Remember, Jacob had pretended to be Esau's older brother, and now Leah pretended to be her younger sister. As Jacob had deceived Isaac by taking advantage of his inability to see due to poor eyesight (27:36), so Laban deceived Jacob by taking advantage of his inability to see in the dark tent (29:25). What goes around comes around.

Laban seeks to justify his actions. He refers to the custom of the firstborn. He hadn't brought it up before (v.26). Remember Esau was the firstborn, but Jacob wasn't content with following that custom in his own household. But this time, the custom of the firstborn will be honored. No doubt God used this event to awaken Jacob to the pain his own treachery had caused others. I think that this painful experience was God's rebuke of Jacob for deceiving his father to obtain the blessing. It served as another formative event in his life. Laban tells Jacob to finish the "week of this one" and then he will give him Rachel (v. 27-28). The bridal "week" was the week of feasting that followed a marriage in that culture (v. 27; Judges 14:12, 17). Seven days after Jacob consummated his marriage to Leah, Laban agreed to give Rachel to him as his wife (v.29-30). But this deal would require seven more years of "sweat equity".

What is relevant is the fact that Jacob loved Rachel more than he loved Leah. Jacob was behaving just as his parents had. Just as they favored one son above the other, so Jacob favored one of his wives above the other. In both cases, serious family problems followed. Such preferential love is the soil in which sibling jealousy grows (29:31, 33; 30:1, 15). The Mosaic Law later prohibited a man from marrying two sisters at the same time (Leviticus 18:18). The ideal is stated in Genesis 2:24. Jacob wanted Rachel to be his wife, but God intended him to marry Leah.

Lessons from today's passage:

1. God providentially leads his people (Proverbs 16:9).
2. While God incorporates human sin into his providence, He does not approve of it. God sovereignly works all things together, evil and good, to bring about His purposes in the world. He is not thwarted by sin. He works despite it.
3. Despite our sin, God is gracious and faithful to His promises, but in the process, He will lovingly discipline His children (Hebrews 12:5-9). Divine discipline is a sign of God's love for us.
4. Avoid showing favoritism in your family. Favoritism leads to rivalry and jealousy and all sorts of bad things.
5. Treat people fairly. Don't take advantage of them. My point is this: Treat people the way you want to be treated. Treat them fairly. Pay them fairly. Don't mislead them. If you do, guess what? What goes around tends to come around. It's the law of sowing and reaping.

Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

The Bible says, "What goes around, comes around!" (aka: The Law of Sowing and Reaping). Let's use the "Five Question Bible Study" method to see this principle in practice...

Monday— Study Galatians 6:7–9 and Exodus 21:23-25.

Tuesday— Study Psalm 5:10; 7:15-16; 9:15-16; 37:14-15 and Proverbs 26:27.

Wednesday— Study Obadiah 15; Isaiah 33:1 and Proverbs 1:10-11, 18-19.

Thursday— Study 2 Samuel 12:9-11.

Friday— Study 2 Samuel 14:25-26 and 18:9-15.

Saturday— Study Exodus 1:15-22 and 15:1-12.

Bible Text: _____

Date: _____



What idea particularly strikes me from this text? [Note in which verse(s) it is found.]



What question does this text raise in my mind—and how would **this text** answer it?



What about Jesus Christ—his character and/or his redemption—relates to this text?



What action must I take as a result of this text? Be concrete and specific.



With whom will I share what I learned from this text? [and what was their response?]