

For Better or for Worse Lesson 4 3Q 2007

Jacob and Rachel: Labor of Love

SUNDAY

Marrying within the faith – thoughts? Why is it important?

Read last paragraph and bottom green section – thoughts?

What about the women? Did women always have any say in who they were “yoked” to? Where is the example of a father searching for a righteous man for his daughter to marry?

2CO 6:14 Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? ¹⁵ What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? ¹⁶ What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people."

2CO 6:17 "Therefore come out from them
and be separate,
says the Lord.
Touch no unclean thing,
and I will receive you."

2CO 6:18 "I will be a Father to you,
and you will be my sons and daughters,
says the Lord Almighty."

The lesson reminds us of the “sons of God” marrying the “daughters of men” and we can think of examples like this, Samson and Delilah, Ahab and Jezebel, Solomon and the 700 wives, are there any examples of righteous wives being led astray by wicked husbands? Or righteous women leading wicked men to God?

Uncle Simon led niece Mary into prostitution, Mordecai led Esther into try outs for Queen. Did Esther convert the king? Zipporah interceded with Moses to circumcise the kids.

Is the fact there are no stories of righteous wives being led astray by wicked husbands merely an artifact of culture and that women didn't

count? Is it to document the deceptiveness and wickedness of women – which some have argued through the ages? Or might it reveal the weakness of men and the importance of maintaining ones individuality even within the marriage, the importance of keeping God first in all things and the vulnerability to exploitation and betrayal which occurs inside the bonds of trust? Even in heaven this vulnerability was exploited:

The high honors conferred upon Lucifer were not appreciated as God's special gift, and therefore, called forth no gratitude to his Creator. He gloried in his brightness and exaltation and aspired to be equal with God. He was beloved and revered by the heavenly host, angels delighted to execute his commands, and he was clothed with wisdom and glory above them all. .. {PP 36.3}

Taking advantage of the loving, loyal trust reposed in him by the holy beings under his command, he had so artfully instilled into their minds his own distrust and discontent that his agency was not discerned. .. {PP 38.2}

What is the process here described? The angels trusted Lucifer and thus were vulnerable to his deceptions and accepted his ideas and distortions as true without first examining the evidences in the case for themselves.

In marriage in which trust exists, does that make one more vulnerable? How does one protect oneself while maintaining trust?

Should spouses, while trusting and loving each other, stop thinking for themselves and say, “I trust my spouse, so whatever he/she says must be okay”?

Is this a principle to keep in mind whether we are yoked to an unbeliever or a believer? Why? Can a believer make an honest mistake with no intent to harm or deceive yet still be wrong?

THURSDAY

Read top question – thoughts?

Gen 29:30 “Jacob lay with Rachel also, and he loved Rachel more than Leah. And he worked for Laban another seven years.”

Thoughts? Was the problem in this verse that Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah? Or was the problem the deception practiced by Laban, Leah and Rachel?

Put yourself in Leah's shoes, you know Jacob is in love with your sister, so much he has just worked seven years to marry her. He has never made any pretensions toward loving or desiring you, but you and your father scheme to trick Jacob into marrying you, do you really reasonably expect him to love you? To wake up in the morning with happiness and joy at the discovery?

Read first paragraph – thoughts? Are they implying that Jacob should not have married Rachel, that after the deception he should have merely walked away and said, "It must have been God's will."

Read Genesis 29:31,32 "When the LORD saw that Leah was not loved, he opened her womb, but Rachel was barren. 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."

Did God open Leah's womb?

Read Genesis 30:1-5

^{GE 30:1} 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!"

^{GE 30:2} Jacob became angry with her and said, "Am I in the place of God, who has kept you from having children?"

^{GE 30:3} Then she said, "Here is Bilhah, my maidservant. Sleep with her so that she can bear children for me and that through her I too can build a family."

^{GE 30:4} 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.

Didn't the lesson last week criticize the idea of using a concubine to have a child if you were infertile? But here we find a Bible text saying God vindicated this action by bringing forth a son. Did God open Leah's womb? Did God open Bilhah's womb? Did God vindicate Rachel?

Should we use this example for fertility problems today? If you were having problems and your wife brought home a 23 year old women and you slept with her, would you be surprised if she got pregnant? Would you and your wife then say, God had vindicated you?

Rachel was barren for many years was God punishing her and Jacob for Jacob's favoritism? In this family Sarah had fertility problems, Rebekah

had fertility problems and now Rachel has fertility problems – is it possible there is something in this family that is contributing? What about inbreeding? They keep marrying relatives and then have fertility problems?

Third paragraph – read, thoughts? Do you think the favoritism he showed the boys was simply because they were Rachel's or because they loved Jacob, trusted Jacob and were obedient whereas the other boys were not?

Do you think Jacob ever forgave Leah? Do you think he resented her?

In the TQ on page 43 it states, “Jacob married Rachel after seven years of labor. What responsibility do we have to be able to provide for a family before starting one?” Thoughts?

Was this merely a cultural need during Bible times or is this important today? If you live in a society in which the state will provide a welfare system to care for your family if you don't then is it important to wait until you can care for a family yourself first? Why? What happens to us if we are capable but don't care for our families?

Are people who donate sperm or egg responsible for caring for the offspring that arise from that genetic material?

TUESDAY

Read only paragraph – thoughts? Do you think there were physical, medical reasons why Rachel was barren? Do you think that if she would have trusted God and simply said, it's okay, if God chooses not to heal my physical abilities to reproduce I will be happy loving my husband, then she might have lived a long life with Jacob? But without this attitude if she didn't have children what would their marriage have likely become?

What prevented Rachel from having a healthier attitude toward this situation? Narrow vision – seeing the here and now not the eternal, false beliefs from her culture that one's worth was in ability to bear children, that children are a gift from God and not having them means one is not blessed by God, misunderstanding of God and selfishness.

Leah named her first child “See my son” (Rueben) and Rachel names her maidservant's second child “I have won” Think about calling the kids for dinner – SEE MY SON, I HAVE WON, do you think there might have been some tension?

WEDNESDAY

Read top section “Review what we’ve read...”

2CO 7:1 Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.

Thoughts? What does it mean to purify ourselves? Are we to save ourselves? Is it a system of works?

If someone is sick and dying with smallpox and there is another person who is immune because they had previously had cowpox and thus their blood has antibodies. And these antibodies are taken from the one person and offered freely to the one dying. Will belief in the effectiveness of the antibodies heal and save? If you were 100% certain, with no doubt whatsoever, would your faith, confidence and belief result in healing without taking the antibodies?

Christ has won the victory – He has overcome the infection that brings death, He stands ready to infuse us with His love, His character, which will heal. We may be 100% convinced of this, but we still must choose to apply the remedy Christ has won to our lives.

When the sick persons take the antibodies do they heal themselves? No, did they do anything to add to the treatment? Did they make it more effective? No, they merely applied what was produced by another and freely given.

Read bottom green section – thoughts? We are sick, sin sick, born infected with selfishness and struggle with the symptoms produced by this condition. God is the great physician working to heal and restore. If you had a sick child and that child had all kinds of symptoms would you stop working to heal and restore? Our sins are symptoms of the sickness in our heart. God doesn’t stop working with us if we “sin” but if we persist in sin and don’t seek Him for His remedy, healing, deliverance then over time we become more and more damaged and less and less capable of responding to God’s gracious entreaties and calls to healing.

TQ page 51 states, “In spite of his sin and deception, Jacob was chosen by God as the inheritor of His covenant with Abraham. What lessons can you gather from this that are applicable to your life?”

That God was bound by Isaac’s actions to honor Jacob?
That God made a pronouncement before their birth and had to

follow through in order to keep His word
That Jacob, despite struggling with sin, always remained willing
to work with God, always kept his heart open to God, thus
the lesson is that God never gives up on us, we have to give
up on Him.

FRIDAY

Question 2 - any thoughts?

Question 5 read - does being married a long time mean the marriage
was a happy one? Any thoughts on principles that result in happy
marriages?