



JACOB MARRIES LEAH AND RACHEL

Part 28 of Genesis

Pastor Mark Driscoll | Genesis 29:1 - 30 | April 24, 2005

So you're gonna get to know Jacob, okay? His dad is Isaac. His granddad is Abraham. We've gotten to know Jacob the last few weeks. Here's what we've learned about the guy. He's a sinner. He's a sinful guy. He manipulates the family birthright out of his furry, redheaded brother, Esau. He then tricks his blind old man in this allegiance with his mom to steal the family blessing from his brother, Esau. So he's a total sinner. He's not a great guy. He's a late bloomer, total underachiever, in his 70s, no wife, no kids, no job, just ripping off his blind old man and taking advantage of his impetuous brother. We also see not only is he a sinner, he's also really soft. He's just not very manly at all, and as soon as conflict comes with his brother, he just, sort of, packs up his Barbie's and runs for his life. (Laughter) Just terrible, you know, and so we looked at how he's just a coward, and then we saw something amazing happen. We saw that God saved him. So he went from a sinner and a soft guy to a guy who got saved, and that's where God came to him, revealed himself to him, forgave his sins, embraced him and now is in process of continuing to work with him.

Today we know we get saved, as our friend shared, through Jesus through the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. That's God come to us to take away our sins, and that's how we're saved from hell and from judgment and the wrath of God. So he goes from sinner and soft guy to being saved, and now what we're seeing today is a part of his life that probably most of you are in this season of your life, and that is what the Apostle Paul in the New Testament calls being sanctified. You become a Christian, and now God's working on your character. He's working on your life. He's trying to root out sin and folly and rebellion, and he's trying to grow you to be more like Jesus. That's exactly what we see in his life today, and the scenes for this break down into two very simple scenarios. First, we're going to look at a scene where he goes to a well, and so everything centers around the well, and if it were a film about half of the movie would be there, and then the camera pans over, and the second scene is going to be at a wedding. So we're going to look at his brand-new Christian. This guy at this point we'd say he's a brand-new believer, and now his life is transitioning as he's running away from home and moving, and what is God gonna do to help this guy grow in his faith?

So that's where we pick it up in Genesis 29. "Then Jacob continued on his journey" – again, he's journeying 'cause he's a coward running from his brother that he ripped off, and he doesn't want to get hurt – "and came to the land of the eastern peoples. There he saw a well in the field, with three flocks of sheep lying near it because the flocks were watered from that well." And in those towns the well was the center point around which the communities would grow. That's where you'd get your – I had bacon for breakfast. Oh, it was so good. (Laughter) Excuse me, there – "with three flocks of sheep." And so what would happen is around the well would be built the towns, and that's where people would congregate and gather. So the well is literally the center point upon which the community is built, and then the stone over the mouth of the well was large. So what happened would be there'd be a large well, and there'd be a large stone that they would roll over it. A couple of reasons for that, to keep dirt, animals, such things falling into the well, also to keep people from falling in and get harmed and polluting the water and creating problems. So this was the ancient equivalent to a gate or a door. This is a covering for the well.

"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." So you're just getting an introduction to the scene; it's around this well. "Jacob asked the shepherds, 'My brothers, where are you from?' 'We're from Haran,' they replied. He said to them, 'Do you know Laban, Nahor's grandson?' Here's who he's looking for because when he and his mother came up with this scheme to trick his blind father and rip off his older brother, his mother knew he was going to get killed by his angry brother told him to go instead to another place where he could live, and that would be at her brother, Laban's, home. So that's what he's looking for. He's looking for his family to help him out.

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Laban is the grandson of Abraham, and now this man, Jacob, is the grandson of Abraham. So they're family, and that's the basic point. He's going to stay with his family through his grandfather's side. "Yes, we know him," they answered. Then Jacob asked them, "Is he well?" "Mom told me to come back to her brother and to live with him. Is he okay? Is he around here? I need to find this family." "Yes, he is," they said, "and here comes his daughter Rachel with the sheep." So now Rachel shows up. Moses just brilliantly is an amazing storyteller, just introduces Rachel very subtly into the story, and she is – well, you'll see. She's something else, and she comes with sheep, which that's like, "And the hot girl came with a bass boat." (Laughter) You know? That's what that reads like in that day because sheep are wealth, and it's affluence, and literally, today it would be the hot girl with a bass boat. You're like, "Oh, thank you, Jesus, just what I prayed for, a hot girl who fishes and has her own boat."~~

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Here's what Jacob says, "Look," Jacob says, "the sun is still high; it is not time for the flocks to be gathered. Water the sheep and take them back to pasture." "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." And now to roll the stone away is a big deal. It's heavy. It would take a couple shepherds. This is a great deal of work. This is labor.

"While he was still talking with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep, for she was a shepherdess." So here comes Rachel. "Hi, you like my sheep?"

” (Laughter) She’s just all hot, you know, and here’s Jacob. At this point he’s in his 70s or 80s, right? Total underachiever, guy still doesn’t have a license, can’t read, you know, hasn’t got a job. He’s just a total underachiever, but here comes hot Rachel, and Jacob’s gotta make a first impression. Gentlemen, how important is the first impression? It’s everything because if you’re gonna fool her, that’s your best shot, you know? (Laughter) So dudes are thinking, “First impression matters. I gotta really – how are we gonna pull this off?”

So he’s trying to figure out how to impress her. He doesn’t have any money with her. His dad gave him a blessing but didn’t give him any finances. So he’s flat broke, homeless, wanting to freeload, crash at his uncle’s pad, but here comes the hot girl; what’s he gonna do? So, “When Jacob saw Rachel daughter of Laban, his mother’s brother, and Laban’s sheep, he went over and rolled the stone away from the mouth of the well and watered his uncle’s sheep.” Rachel’s coming. The crazy, lazy old man goes up to the rock, “Ooh,” moves the rock. (Laughter) He goes full on man; that’s what he does. This is what a guy can do. You ever seen a guy with, like, a 46 inch waist and a huge gut, and the hot girl walks by, and he wheels his gut up into his chest? (Laughter) He’s got, like, a 26 waist and huge pecs, “Hello.” (Laughter) He just mans himself up. That’s what he does. He’s a crazy, lazy old man. It takes multiple shepherds to roll the stone, and he’s just biding time. “Well, here comes that hot girl. Wait till she gets close enough, and then I’m gonna make a lot of man noise and move the rock all by myself – Ooh.” How many guys are like this, right? You’re at the gym. In walks the hot girl, “Huh, huh, huh, huh.” She walks away like, “Uh, oh, oh, mother Mary, I pulled everything.” (Laughter) “I can’t feel anything from the waist up.” This is what dudes do, man, you know? Then they just lather themselves in, like, you know, Sport Aid or something just trying to take away the pain, but this is what men do. Otherwise, completely wimpy, cowardly guys who can’t get a lid off a jar of mayonnaise, a hot girl walks by, and they turn green, and their shirt doesn’t fit, and they just slip into man mode.

That’s exactly what’s going on here. This is what we do, right, guys? Right, this is first impression, lift something heavy. (Laughter) They can’t resist that. “I could pick you up myself. Want to see?” (Laughter) That’s what he does. He slips into man mode. Good for him. “And he waters his uncle’s sheep.” So now he’s gonna pretend like he’s industrious and hardworking. Now you can fool some of the women some of the time, and that’s how you get a wife. That’s where the story’s going, right? And this is what he does. He’s a lazy guy. We’ve never seen him work. We’ve never seen him lift anything, and now he’s a hard worker, “Oh, I’ll feed the sheep. Oh, you have sheep. Oh, let me get that water. Here, let me feed the sheep.”

How many of you guys, this is it? You were a total underachieving, late bloomer till you met the hot girl, and then you figured, you said, “I gotta get a job. I gotta get a car. I gotta learn how to read. I got a lot to do. I gotta get socks that aren’t white. I gotta get a shirt with buttons.” (Laughter) “I got a lot to do ‘cause there’s the hot girl. She’s motivation, incentive.” And you ladies, you need to know this. A sweet, kind, nice, delightful woman is incredible incentive for a guy – incredible. Guys that are complete nobodies rise to the occasion, and if a guy doesn’t want to be with you, he’ll demonstrate it by not really going out of his way, working hard, going beyond the call of duty and stepping up to the requirements of acquiring that kind of lovely woman.

And so, all of a sudden, he’s a new Christian. “Oh, I need to get me a woman. I need to impress her. I’ll work very, very hard.” How many of you guys didn’t really get a job, didn’t really hold a job, didn’t really advance in your job till you had some woman that you were totally smitten with, and she was incentive, motivation? Absolutely, women don’t understand this. The right woman is the greatest motivator for a guy, inspires him to take risks, to work hard, to accomplish things that on his own he never would have. That’s what’s happening here. “Then Jacob kissed Rachel” – which seems weird. Don’t you start with like, “Hi.” Here’s what he does. “I’m man, move rock, water – muah.” And that’s how he goes at it. (Laughter) You know, and some of the commentators said, “Well, that’s how they greeted one another.” Well, maybe, but you know, I can’t find anywhere in the Bible where a man kisses any woman that’s not his wife or his mother. This is the only one I could find, okay? And so generally we don’t start this way. You know, “I lifted something heavy. Now can we make out?” Usually it takes a little more than that – “and then he begins to weep aloud.”

So he’s still kind of a, you know, he’s still kind of a, you know, Spice Girl fan, you know? (Laughter) He’s still, kind of, chicken. He’s not real dudely, you know? “[Crying] Oh, it’s so good to be here, so nice, so good, and did you see me lift the rock? Did you see that? It was – man. You want to touch it. I’ll let you touch it.” So, you know, his character is coming along, but he’s still got some defects and flaws. New believer, he’s working at it. So now he’s gonna talk to her. “Hey, now that we’ve made out, would you like to talk? I hear that women like that.” “He had told Rachel that he was a relative of her father and a son of Rebekah. So she ran and told her dad.” “Oh, our relative’s here. We gotta welcome him.”

Because, see, the last time that a relative came to visit Laban that was when, who, Jacob’s mom got married to Jacob’s dad, and so now when that side of the family shows up, ooh, well, it could be marriage. That’s kinda how it’s been working in Genesis. “As soon as Laban heard the news about Jacob, his sister’s son, he hurried to meet him. He embraced him and kissed him” – so maybe it’s not too weird ‘cause here dudes are kissing each other. You could shake my hand, don’t need to be Biblical. “He embraced him, kissed him and brought him to his home, and there Jacob told him all these things.” So Laban welcomes him. “Oh, buddy, good to see you. You’re family. Welcome.” But the problem is Laban’s a total conman and trickster just like Jacob.

And so here’s the moral of the story. When you meet you somebody and they’re really, really friendly and really, really nice and embrace you and welcome you, eh, sometimes you gotta be wondering, “Are they setting me up for a con? They’re really nice, but I wonder if maybe this isn’t totally genuine.” “Then Laban said to him, ‘You are my own flesh and blood.’” “You’re a relative. You’re family. You’re safe here. You can trust me,” – wink-wink. “After Jacob had stayed with him for a whole month,” – a whole month – “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.’”

Here’s what he says, “Hey, you’ve been working for a whole month without getting any pay, and I was thinking about it. Maybe you’d like some. You think about it, and tell me how much you would like.” Is this a nice guy, or is this a little awkward. How many of you, you say, “I got this uncle.” You work for a month for free, and then he says, “Oh, were you thinking about getting paid? We’ll pray about that, and your write a number down, and I’ll think about it.” He’s a crooked business conman. You’re gonna see that he actually squeezes the better part of 20 years of free labor out of this guy before it’s all said and done. So that’s the scene at the well.

Now we move to the scene at the wedding. This is fraught with peril. I was telling my wife about this story, laughing hysterically. She really wasn’t. I was, and she said, “You can’t say that. You can’t say that. You can’t say that. There will be no woman left in the church, and I don’t know if I will be there either. You can’t say or do that.” And I probably will, but I’m just telling you up front where we’re going. (Laughter) “Now Laban had two

daughters" – here's where it – dah, dah, dah, dah – here's where it gets dramatic – "the name of the older was Leah," – which means cow. (Laughter) I am the mailman. I do not write the mail. I deliver the mail. Leah means cow. Now, some of you are going, "My name's Leah." (Laughter) Bummer. (Laughter) Bummer for you – bummer for you. Your parents meant well. They got a Bible. They were looking through it, "Oh, look, Leah, that's a nice name in the Bible. We'll name the son Judas. That's a good name too." (Laughter) They probably should've done a little more homework, you know, but they meant well.

Cow, I can't – I got two daughters. That kind of prophetic name, you don't want to do that – "and the name of the younger was Rachel." Rachel means ewe. That's like the baby lamb, oh, beautiful, lovely cute, we all love her. So we'll just keep going. "Leah had weak eyes," – this is where you start chucking stuff, ladies, but it's there. Okay, she has – some commentators say that means she's not attractive and couldn't afford plastic surgery. Some say that means that she's cross eyed. Some say that it means she has a lazy eye. Wherever you go with it, it's just not good, right? I mean, and I know you're saying, "But, man, we're not supposed to talk about people's physical problems because some people are attractive; some people aren't, but we don't say that." We say, "Everybody's pretty in their own way," and then we chuckle because we don't believe that. (Laughter) Yeah.

"Leah had weak eyes, but Rachel was lovely in form and beautiful." Now this is gonna be very hard, ladies. Not all women look alike. I'm not supposed to say that. Some women are endowed by God with incredible beauty, and other women are not. I'll just move on. (Laughter) If you can see what I see, it's like laser beams from – it's just like, dude, it's scary, but see we don't like to talk about that, but you know, the Bible does. Leah has to accept the fact that her sister is more attractive than her. Some of you ladies will need to accept the fact that you have a sister that's more attractive than you or a friend that's more attractive than you, and because of that what you're going to see is that this woman, Rachel, because she's more attractive, she has an easier life. Is that still true? No. (Laughter) Go to the Mariners game, all the hot gals are down right on the field like, "Oh, we don't all get seats at the field?" No, some of us are up there with Jesus in the third heaven and have to buy our own beer. (Laughter) Like, you know, not all of us get that. Some women that are attractive, life goes a little easier. You're gonna see that.

"Leah had weak eyes, but Rachel was lovely in formal and beautiful." Hot, hot, hot, with a bass boat, I mean, she's a winner. She is a beautiful, lovely, amazing gal. Here comes Jacob. Which one do you think he wants to marry? I didn't say it. "Jacob was in love with Rachel and said, 'I'll work seven years for you in return for you in return for your younger, hotter daughter Rachel'" – seven years – seven years because he didn't have the bride price or dowry, his daddy was rich, sent him out of the house with no money, why? I think because he knows his son is a spoiled, lazy brat and says, "You know what; you go toughen up. Be a man. Figure it out." So he shows up empty handed, but he really wants to be with this beautiful woman, so what does he need to do? He needs to work for it?

Most women that I meet completely underestimate their value. They give themselves away too quickly, too easily, too cheaply. This woman is so amazing that this man offers seven years of what is essentially slavery to be with her. The reason why a bride price was paid was to demonstrate that the man could work hard, make money, save, and he was responsible because if I'm a father with a sweet daughter, and this man wants to marry her, and I'm going to entrust her care and my kids and my grandkids to this man, I want to see that he can work. That he can make money. That he's hardworking, and he's industrious, and he's responsible. He's masculine. He could shoulder his load, as it were, and so they would pay a bride price. The dad would say, "Well, give me \$25,000.00, and we'll see if you're serious."

As opposed to our day where cheap, lazy men go Dutch. I don't know if the Dutch people are just cheap or where we came up with that, but Dutch means she pays half; I pay half because, "Oh, it's just such a heavy load to pick up the fries and the Coke." That's the world we live in. These just very soft guys who can't work, can't labor, can't make money. I'll tell you what, ladies, if he wants to be with you, he will get it done. If he has to get seven jobs, sleep in a tent at the park and eat whatever he hits with his car, he will get it done, right? (Laughter) And if what he says is, "Well, I'm really busy, or I don't type well so I haven't gotten my resume done this year," he doesn't want to be with you or not very badly. So a lot of women will, "I'll make up the difference. I'll pay the bills. I'll run after him. I'll just make it real easy." Don't make it too easy. Otherwise, he may not really want to be with you.

This guy's willing to work seven years. How many of you guys have a woman that if it took seven years of hard, manual labor without a wage, you would take the deal because you would get to be with that woman? That is a woman that you love. How many of you guys before you got married you had to make money, and you killed yourself to make enough money to earn the right to buy a ring, to love the woman, to go to the altar, and to do what it takes? See, this is great. Women don't understand what an incredible motivator and incentive they are. They don't understand that. Now, my wife and I, Grace, she'll often say, "Oh, thank you for taking care of us. Thank you for providing for us. Thanks." No, you don't understand. A guy's gotta do something, and for himself to get up every day and get kicked in the head and go to work and pour himself out, it's really not that big of a motivation unless he has this woman that he's just absolutely into, and then with her comes children and family. Now the guy's got a reason to get up on Monday morning and to go slug it out in the world. Amen, gentlemen, right?

Response: Right.

You say, "Okay, now I got a reason to get up." Up until this point we haven't seen this guy work hard, get a job, save money, do anything. An attractive woman, all of a sudden, he is motivated, intrinsically motivated to step up and to be the kind of man who's worthy of being with this delightfully lovely woman. Ladies, don't underestimate the incentive you are to a man, and this woman is great incentive. Work for seven years, here's how it's gonna go. "Laban said, 'It is better that I give her to you than to some other man. So stay with me.'" Laban doesn't kindly, "Oh, seven years seems like a lot. Seven years sounds good." You know, Jacob may have been coming in high and trying to be gracious, ha-ha, not Laban. Laban is a crooked conman. "So Jacob served seven years to get Rachel," – seven years. How many of you guys right now, if you were told by God, "Work hard for seven years, and then you can marry her, or you can run off to Vegas tomorrow with this one girl," would you hang in there for seven years? If not, that's probably not the woman you're truly in love with. The right woman is easily worth seven years of your life.

And this is one of the greatest lines of poetry in the whole Bible. This is the kind of thing that women write down, and it's like a greeting card. It just, mm, it's lovely – "but they seemed like only a few days to him because of his love for her." Oh, doesn't that sound nice, ladies? (Laughter) And he broke his back, and he had callouses, and it was seven years, and he was killing himself, but it only seemed like a few days because he loved her so much. But you know what, ladies, it's totally true. A man's life stinks. He toils under the sun, Ecclesiastes says. He goes to work and gets kicked

around all day by his competitors, by his petty boss, by those working under him. Life is filled with sin and folly and chaos and nonsense, and a guy trying to get his business built, trying to build his income, it's terrible, unless he has a delightful woman, and then time moves quickly because when he's sitting at work all day roofing, sitting in the cubicle next to the complete knucklehead next to him that doesn't do his job so he has to work twice as hard to do two jobs, what is that guy thinking about all day? That woman.

See, guys, we can think about two things, whatever we're thinking about and a woman, right? (Laughter) I won't go anywhere further except to fire myself, but you know what I'm talking about. And so if a guy has a delightfully sweet woman that he likes to look at, that's what he's thinking about. That's what he's thinking about. So he gets through his day, gets through his job, gets through his career, gets through his hard times, why? The time moves quickly because his motivation is, "I'm gonna be with her." I'll be honest with you. There's certain days I'm working. There's certain days I'm out of town, and all I'm thinking is, "I can endure anything because eventually I'm gonna get to go home to my wife, and I like looking at her." See and what we see here, he loves her, but he also likes looking at her.

Okay, now some of you are over spiritual. You also need to be physically attracted to your mate, right? Some of you say, "Oh, well, they need to have a good heart." True, and a face too 'cause you're gonna be looking at that for a really long time, right? (Laughter) So you gotta like looking at their head. If not, I mean, in addition to some other things, you gotta like looking at them, right? I mean, otherwise, and I get this all the time, people are like, "Well, they really have a nice personality. I don't like to look at them, but they're really, really" – well, you're gonna be looking at them. So get someone that you like, and you're in love with them, but also get someone that you're attracted to – I mean, you don't want to be the one that's not attractive, right? But you gotta like looking at them, right? I mean, my wife all the time, she'll be doing something, and I'm just looking at her, just looking at her. She'll say, "What are you doing?" "I'm looking at you." "Why?" "I like looking at you. I gotta look at something. This is my favorite. We've been together 17 years; this is good. You know, I like looking at you." It's nice to have somebody you're married to that you like looking at them. It's okay. Praise God. You know, and here he loves her. He's also attracted to her. He likes her. He also likes looking at her. Seven years, what's he thinking about, "She looks good. It's only seven years. She really looks good. Seven years, look how good she looks." He makes it through seven years because she is so much to him. Man, and ladies, isn't it nice when a husband is totally into you? Like, can't stop thinking about you, just attracted to you, likes looking at you, will go to work and put in 100 hours and come home and say, "Oh, I'm glad to be home. I was thinking about you all day." Calls you during the day, "Hi, I'm just thinking about you. I'm thinking about you all the time." Right? If it's a boyfriend, we call it a stalker. If it's husband, we call it a Godly man. (Laughter)

So he works the seven years – seven years. He's an older man, 70s, 80s – seven years. "Then Jacob said to Laban, 'Give me my wife.'" And this is funny, "'My time is completed, and I want to lie with her.'" (Laughter) Every dude's like, "Biblical." Yeah. (Laughter) Yeah, right? It's like, "I don't want to play Scrabble. I don't want to talk about my feelings. I don't want to go to the grocery store." Seven years, I had a goal, and now I want to accomplish it – repeatedly." He wants to be with – now a lot of ladies they give themselves away too easy. Now, ladies, do you think that maybe she felt a little guilty. Seven years, he walks in the door, "Okay, baby, five years ago – oh, I feel so bad. He's working so hard. He broke his back. He's got callouses. You know, maybe I should kiss him, make out with him. Maybe we could live together. Maybe we could run to Vegas. You know, maybe we could sleep together. I mean, we're gonna be married. We're married in our heart." (Laughter)

You know, do you think, ladies, maybe she felt guilty? How many of you ladies feel guilty. Your guy starts working hard saying, "I love you. I want to marry you." And your dad says, "Well, you know, you gotta get a job. You gotta make some money. You gotta buy a house. You gotta – ding, ding, ding, ding, ding – you gotta stop taking her out on the BMX bike, go get a car. You gotta get some stuff done here." And you're saying, "Oh, but I love him, and it just seems so hard, and I feel so" – ah, don't. He's a dude. It's good for him. It's good for him. I've told you before; I'll tell you again. Men are like trucks. We drive straighter with a load. Just let them carry it, right? He'll be fine. This is how guys are. It's good. "Load, oh, good, now I go straight." You know, and it's good, and so she hangs in there. "Well, I'm not living with him, not sleeping with him, not making out with him, not gonna take birth control, not gonna abort the kids, not gonna do any of that. He can just slug it out for seven years, and when he's ready – ta-da – then I'll be his wife." Incentive, motivation – whoo, I pray this for all you guys. Not this, (Laughter) this is bad here.

"So Laban brought together all the people of the place and gave them a great feast." This is the wedding day. [Gasps] Women start planning this when they're about this big, right? My daughter's already got, like, half of it put together; she's seven. I mean, this is the day, feast, white dress, food, music. She walks down the aisle like the queen. Everybody stands up. [Gasps] They breathe deeply. [Gasps] People are passing out because she's so amazing. This is the day, the wedding day. I did a wedding yesterday. I love doing weddings. It's great, but – oh, here we go. Here we go. This is how it's gonna go right here. "But when evening came," – crooked, crazy – "Laban took his daughter Leah" – which one does he want to marry? Young, hot Rachel, takes lazy eyed Leah (Laughter) this is not good – "and gave her to Jacob, and Jacob lay with her."

Doh, what? How did this happen? It doesn't say. It doesn't say. I'm assuming Jacob had a few too many drinks – seems to be a problem with the patriarchs – goes into the tent, the candles are out. Laban substitutes Rachel for Leah. Leah in the dark goes to bed with the kinda drunk Jacob. If this were a movie, I would cast Ashton Kutcher as Laban because he's totally getting punked right here. (Laughter) Right? I mean, that's what's going on. "And Laban gave his servant girl Zilpah to his daughter as her maidservant." Oh, no. Seven years, this guy he's been thinking about waking up with the hot, lovely, attractive, undressed Rachel for seven years. Wakes up the next morning, finally it's light so he can see her. He's a little hung over, but he's excited. "I get to see her – whoo, seven years." "When morning came, there was Leah!" (Laughter) That had to be an awkward moment – Leah. (Laughter)

Here's how I see it. "So Jacob said to Laban," – he comes running out in his boxer shorts with his hair all disheveled, still kinda hung over like Kramer on Seinfeld. "She – what have you done?" You know, he's kinda got that going on. (Laughter) "What is this you have done to me?" "I said, 'I do' to the hot one, and I woke up with the other one. This is not good." I mean, this is just crazy. So what's gonna happen now? "I served you for Rachel," – I worked hard for seven years – "didn't I? Why have you deceived me?" Oh, this is good. He uses the word deceived. What does his name mean; what does Jacob mean? Deceiver! (Laughter) Here's God in heaven, "Oh, this is hilarious. This is so funny. Look at that. That little – I got him. Ha-ha-ha, ah, this is beautiful. Look at that, and now he's all mad 'cause he got tricked. Oh, that's funny right there."

See, Proverbs says, "You reap what you sew," right? He's a trickster, a deceiver. He's a total hypocrite. Here's like, "Mike Tyson saying I just feel like

they have emotional instability.” Yeah, you’re a hypocrite, you know, I mean, just crazy. “You deceived me. Oh, you did to me what I did to my brother and my dad. Doh.” See, the whole reason he got there, he deceived his brother. He deceived his father. That’s how he got there. You remember? He faked that he was Esau, and what he did, he substituted himself, the younger brother, for Esau, the older brother. All Laban did was turn the tables and substituted the older sister for the younger sister. The Bible says, “Do not be deceived. God will not be mocked. You will reap what you sew.” If you’re a liar, eventually a better liar is gonna get you. If you’re a thief, a better thief is gonna get you. At this point he can’t really yell at Laban because Laban has simply done to him exactly what he has done.

And I’ll tell you what; this is just the brutal, painful reality of it. God often times puts us as believers in relationships with people, particularly unbelievers, who have the same character defects as us but are far better at it to cause us to just absolutely suffer miserably so we know how it has been for others as they have been treated by us, and it is incredibly painful. I can think of one guy in particular who is very much like me, which is why I don’t like him. (Laughter) He has all the same character defects that I do, and being in a working relationship with this guy was one of the most excruciatingly miserable experiences of my whole life, and in the middle of it I remember crying out to God saying, “God, why would you do this?” And as I thought about it, I thought, “I’m just like this guy. I wonder if everyone else feels like this around me.” Yeah. Yeah.

So now God is using the unbeliever, this other man, like a rod of discipline and correction in his hand to straighten out this rebellious son. You reap what you sew. You reap what you sew. Isn’t it interesting; people who are sexually promiscuous get all mad when their spouse cheats on them. People who lie all the time, when someone lies to them they get infuriated. People who steal and are crooked in their business dealings, when someone cons them, they are mad. People who gossip about others and undermine them and say terrible things, when someone should say something negative behind their back, they are furious. That’s Jacob, a total hypocrite. His name means deceiver. The only thing he’s really done before pulling into town with Uncle Laban is rip people off, run cons; he’s a total scam artist, and now he’s met his match. Man, it’s painful, isn’t it? “Laban stole from me.”

‘It is not our custom here to give the younger daughter in marriage before the older one’ – well, you know, Jacob, you got the older and the younger, and you’re supposed to honor the older first ‘cause that’s the way it is, right? “Oh, yeah, I dishonored my older brother, Esau. I am now reaping what I am sowing.” Yeah, isn’t it interesting though? ‘Cause Laban here is telling the truth. He is being more Biblical in his thinking though he’s the unbeliever. At least he’s thinking more morally than the believer – ‘Finish this daughter’s bridal week’ – enjoy your honeymoon – ‘then we will give you the younger one also,’ there is gonna be some tension in that family – ‘in return for another seven years of work.’” Oh, you want the hot one? That’ll be 14 years.

How many of you guys at this point would say, “I’m done. She is hot, but that’s 14 years of my life, and I’m going on 100.” (Laughter) “I’m a late bloomer, and I’m running out of time.” How many of you guys would grab the hot girl, run to Vegas? Forget about her daddy; I don’t care what he says. How many of you would just take her? How many of you would just walk away? He doesn’t. You know what; he really does love her. When a guy is willing, ladies, to put up with years of misery and hardship, he really does love you. He really does love you. He loves this woman, and so he is going to hang in there. You’ll see the rest of the story.

“And Jacob did so” – seven years, unpaid, hard labor, getting taken advantage of by the crooked conman, Laban – “He finished the week with Leah,” – went on their honeymoon – “and then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel to be his wife.” So he gets both women as his wives – tension in the home. Ladies, can you imagine if your husband was married to you and your sister, and she was the hot one? (Laughter) Oh, boy.

We’ll just keep going. “Laban gave his servant girl Bilhah to his daughter Rachel a maidservant, and Jacob lay with Rachel also,” – finally, finally. This is a guy who has a goal. That is to be with this woman. Finally, that is achieved, and here is a sad line – “and he loved Rachel more than Leah. And he worked for Laban another seven years.” Now how many of you ladies read that, and you say that’s very sad because one woman was loved and the other wasn’t loved? Don’t – don’t feel sorry for her, why? Did he ever say he loved her? No. Did he pursue her? No. Did he intend to marry her? No. Was he ever intending to marry her? No. Well, how did he end up with her? She tricked him. This is not unlike a woman who wants to be with a guy who doesn’t want to be with her, so she goes to bed with him and gets pregnant and has a baby so that he will feel that he is stuck with her. It’s manipulation, and it’s control. Now, she has sinned.

All right, any time a woman tells her sister, “Okay. You marry him, and then we’ll swap places when you go into the Marriott, and I’ll go to bed with him, and then he’ll wake up, and he’ll be married to me.” That is not a woman who should get a lot of sympathy because she’s in a hard place. I mean, ladies imagine it. Imagine you pulled this scam with your sister, and then her husband also your husband isn’t totally into her. That should not be entirely shocking. He never was into her. Okay. And what I want you to see is this. Everybody in the story sins, right? The most likely person to be pegged as a good person is Rachel or Leah, but they conned Jacob, right, ladies? I mean, this is a bad con. Now maybe their crooked dad, Laban, dreamt up the scheme, but the ladies had to go along with it. Rachel put on her wedding dress, went to the wedding, took the photos, went down the aisle, said, “I do.” Shed her tears, “I promise to love, serve, obey” – blah, blah, blah – “thank you, Jesus.” Okay, now it’s like big time wrestling, tags Leah. Leah jumps in the ring, consummates the marriage and becomes the wife.

The girls are sinful and crooked like their old man. Their dad is a wicked conman trying to squeeze 14 years of hard labor out of a guy in exchange for his hot daughter. He’s using her as a commodity, but Jacob, too, is a crooked guy. The only reason he’s there is because he’s a coward. After ripping off his brother and his dad he’s running for his life instead of facing up to his problems. Everybody’s got a problem in this story. Everybody’s a sinner. Everybody needs work. Everybody needs God because none of them is the hero in this story. Okay, now I want you to see that, yeah, it is sad that Leah’s not loved, but it really is Leah’s fault.

And I’ll tell you this too, ladies. Maybe this is where I get a little stern and fatherly with you. A lot of women come in and say, “My husband doesn’t love me.” Well, you know what; did you trick him into the marriage? Did you take advantage of him? Are you a deceiving, conniving, difficult woman? If so, perhaps the fact that he’s having a hard time loving you isn’t entirely his fault. It isn’t always just that the woman is glorious and sinless, and that the husband has failed to love her. Sometimes it is deceitful and maniacal and controlling women who get guys in a relationship and manipulate things and conceal things and tell lies, and when they’re not loved, then they freak out, and they want sympathy. It’s amazing how the book is some 4,000 years old, but it’s so incredibly contemporary and relevant to our own age that it’s unbelievable because this stuff still happens all the time – guys who are immature, women who are manipulative, and fathers who are crooked looking for a way to profit by brokering their own daughters. It’s terrible.

Here's the hard part in the story. We've looked at everybody's who's sinful. The question then is, okay, where's God, okay? Does God ever show up in this story? He never does. Does God speak? He doesn't speak. God doesn't show up in this story. The question is, well, is God not involved? No, God is involved, and at this point the book of Genesis starts to transition from appearances of God through miracle and his seeing hand through appearances of God through providence and his unseen hand. It ultimately culminates in the life of Joseph whose life is a grand study of the life of a human being lived under the providential rule of God, and here's where God is at in the story. He's off in the shadows, and he is ruling through providence, and here is exactly what I believe God is doing here in the life of Jacob.

Hebrews 12 speaks of this, and I'll just read it to you. It says this, "Endure hardship as discipline." Okay, if you're a Christian, and you have hardship, physical problems, marital problems, infertility, financial problems, employment problems – whatever it is – hardship, does anyone here have hardship? Okay, we're not saying you don't have hardship. We're saying you do have hardship. What is it? Is it punishment from God because he doesn't love you? No, it's discipline from God because he does. We look at hardship. We cry out to God, "God, I thought you were a good God. How come I have hardship?" God would say, "Well, you have hardship because I'm a good God, and this is discipline for you. This is not sent to crush you. It is sent to correct you."

Now, theologically, let me clarify this. This does mean that God does evil, okay? Jacob is a conman. The gals are in on the con. Laban is a conman. He's in on the con. I mean, everybody in this is sinful. God doesn't want Jacob to rip off his blind old man and run for his life. God doesn't want Laban to force a man to work for seven years and then swap daughters on him. God doesn't want the daughters to be lying and manipulating and faking and tricking a man into a false marriage. God doesn't want any of that because it's all sin, but here's the goodness of God. God uses it. In Romans 8, "God works out all things for the good of those who love him and are called according to his purpose." Genesis 50:20, "What is even intended by some as evil is recycled by God for good."

So right now in your life, people are sinning against you. People are gossiping against you. Your marriage is not good. Your finances are not good. Your health is not good. Your circumstances are not good, and you say, "Why, God, why?" And God would say, "Well, I didn't make sinners sin, and I don't make sin happen, but I'll use it as discipline. It's like a switch in my hand, and if my kids are being brats, this is what I will use." Your life is not just about the hardship; it's about you learning discipline. It's part of being a disciple. It comes from the same Latin root. To be a disciple is to undergo discipline. That's what it is, and so many people want to be disciples without any discipline.

Jacob is a man who is lazy. He's a con-artist. He's an underachiever. God is working on his character by making him work, making him serve, making him humble and having him under a man just like him so that he sees all of his character flaws magnified in someone just like him. He goes on, "God is treating you as sons" – that's good news – "for what son is not disciplined by his father." Fathers, make note of that, "I must discipline my children." Proverbs said if you don't discipline them you hate them because you're allowing them to live in sin which leads to death. "If you are not disciplined" – and he says and everyone undergoes discipline – "then you are illegitimate children and not true sons."

You know, when a kid's throwing a fit on the floor, you know who the parent is 'cause that's the one who deals with it. Everybody else just walks by. "Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us, and we respected them for it." When you got a dad who disciplines you, eventually you respect him. Now, at first, you may lay on the floor and freak out and sound like someone's killing you, but when you grow up, you say, "I respect my dad. He loved me. He held the line, and he didn't allow me to be a foolish person that just ruined my life." Okay? God is that kind of father who disciplines his kids to drive them from folly and death and toward life and wisdom. "How much more should we submit to the fathers of our spirits and live." Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought because dad's aren't perfect, and they make mistakes, but God disciplines us for our good that we may share in his holiness. God allows hardship to come into your life as a form of discipline because it's good for you, and most of you don't like that.

Jacob has experienced this in an excruciatingly painful way. Hardship, discipline, and it's good for him because he's a weak man. He's not a masculine man. He's not a hardworking man. He's not an honest man of integrity. This is gonna be the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Jacob's gonna be a patriarch. Jesus Christ is gonna come through the line of Jacob. We've gotta get this guy in shape. We've given him 70, 80 years, and he hasn't figured out anything by himself. That's how we are. We don't come into this world with wisdom and theology and holiness. We come in with folly. We come in with death. We come in with rebellion. God's a dad who adopts us, and then he disciplines us because he loves us. It's for our good so that we'd have a life of peace, and that's what God is doing – I promise you this, if you are a believer – in your life, and you may be sitting at work right next to somebody who's an unbeliever, and you both get fired. Well, for you it's discipline from a loving father. I don't know what it is for them, but for you it is good, and it comes from the hand of a good God. You say, "But I was sinned against." God didn't make the sin happen, but through this it will be good for you. It will teach you discipline. It will hone your character.

This is Jacob's life. These are the hard lessons he is to learn. Hebrews then concludes, "Later on, however" – 'cause it takes a while, doesn't it? It takes a while to root out sin and folly and rebellion and stupidity and laziness and self-centeredness. It takes a while – "Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it." You change, things change. It's better for you, your family, your kids, your grandkids. But here's the problem. Hardship comes – hardship comes, and most of us ask only one question, "How can I change this?" And whatever that is for you, "How can I change this" – have a better marriage, hotter spouse, more obedient kids, get a spouse, have some kids, make some money, buy a house, get a job, get healthy, be independent – whatever it is. Whatever your hardship is, we tend to come at that and ask this question, "How can I change that?"

Let me flip it. Here's what Hebrews is teaching, and I think we see exemplified in the life of Jacob. Here's the question, "How can this change me?" Not so much, "How can I change it?" I'm not saying you don't work on your marriage. I'm not saying you don't work on your job. I'm not saying you don't work on your stuff. I'm not saying that, but maybe it's not so much about you fixing your circumstances as your circumstances fixing you, and God bringing you under hardship and difficulty to form you into a new creation in Christ. See, that's why we can then practice such things as the New Testament calls praising God in all circumstances because this is his will for you in Christ Jesus. You read verses like that, and you say, "What about hardship?" Yeah, that's where we praise him, why, 'cause we want hardship? No, 'cause we want character, because we want a harvest of righteousness, because we want to be more like God and less like us, and to do that God in his infinite wisdom as the perfect father allows everything in

our life to come at the time and in the measure that he knows that we need it so that we would be made more like him. If you believe that, you will be able to praise God in all circumstances, accepting that even hardship is his will for you in Christ Jesus.

Paul nails it. Paul absolutely nails it. Later on he says then to Timothy to watch your life and your doctrine closely, and doctrine is important because it gives us the grid by which to interpret life, and doctrine is important because it gives us the grid by which to interpret life. Things happen. Well, where is God, and what does this mean, and what is he doing? Life is where things happen. Theology is where we make sense of what happens. My fear is for some of you all you care about is doctrine. You want to just read one book, hear one sermon. You don't want to go the long, hard route like Jacob and say, "Okay, 14, maybe 20 years, I may not change this, but it will change me." It's not gonna be 15 or 20 minutes of sanctification. It's gonna be a lifetime.

You need your doctrine. My goal is always to tell you about guys who have sound doctrine, but you gotta watch your life because that is shaping and forming and molding. He's bringing out the sin and the defects and the error and the follow and the selfishness. I'll tell you what; as I'm reading this I got one guy in my life who is totally Laban, and in retrospect without that guy a lot of things about how truly sinful I am I would not have been made aware of had I not had to put up with a guy just like me. Is it hard? Yeah, it's hard. Is it good? Yeah, it's good. It's good for everyone else who has to put up with me. So at this point, my goal is always to teach you theology. Who is God? I want you to look at it now in your life. I want you to look at your life and say, "Okay, God, the hardship, this is what it is." And then to ask God to tell you what it is he is doing in you. What folly and sin and rebellion and error and grief have you caused that he is trying to expose through hardship. Maybe you don't need a new boss. Maybe you don't need a new spouse. Maybe you don't need a new car. Maybe you don't need a new body. Maybe you don't need a new face. Maybe you need to sit under the heavy hand of the providence of God and be changed, rather than running around trying to change everything and everyone else, and allow that providential God then to move you on into the next season of life with things changed, and at that point you'll have the character to actually thrive in that season.

So here's what I'm gonna do. I'm gonna pray for you. I'm gonna pray for us. You're gonna get some time in prayer asking God to give you the grace to endure the hardship knowing that it is good for you and pledging not to cuss God out, not to run like Jacob, not to manipulate and control like Laban, not to scheme like the daughters, but to endure as Jacob is going to be forced to endure, and then we're gonna partake of communion remembering Jesus' body and blood shed for our sin. We're gonna sing and celebrate in response, why? Because nothing in our life is wasted, that's the beauty of it. Everything in our life is recycled and used by the providential hand of the sovereign God to shape in us character to make us more like Jesus Christ. Again, it doesn't mean that he causes sin, but it does mean that he'll use it because he's bigger than sin.

So, Father God, thank you for a chance to study the Scriptures today as the church. God, we see ourselves in the story, manipulative and controlling like Jacob, like Laban, like Rachel and Leah. God, some of us, like Rachel, have benefited simply because we're attractive. We've gotten breaks in life, and people have covered for us and provided for us. Some of us like Leah, Lord God, have had hardship. Maybe we have a physical problem. We have less than a perfect appearance, and because of that we are justified in being cruel, in being mean, in being selfish and manipulative and justifying it because others have made us hurt so now we can hurt others. God, some of us like Laban are sitting here wondering why we should even listen because so far it's going really good. Our schemes are working. Our tricks are working. Our money is flowing, and we're getting our way.

God, thank you that in short order in the coming weeks you will deal with Laban, and you will bring him to the end of himself, and he, too, will reap what he has sown, and God we find hope in the story of Jacob. Thank you that you allow hardship like that to come into our lives. Thank you that it is good for us. Thank you that it is a rod of correction in the hand of a loving father. God, we pray that we would learn the lessons that you have for us. That we would try and just change circumstances and people, but that we would allow people and circumstances to change us so that we might be more like the Lord Jesus by grace, and that God ultimately like Hebrews promises that in our life and the life of our children and grandchildren that there would be a harvest of righteousness. God, we come to you today broken. I'm chief of sinners and hypocrites. I confess God. It's people –