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## JACOB'S SONS BORN

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### Part 29 of Genesis

Pastor Mark Driscoll | Genesis 29:31 - 30:24 | May 01, 2005

So I'll just go ahead and pray, and we'll jump right in. If you've got a Bible, Genesis 29:31 is where we find ourselves, and it's good have you.

Father God, thank you for an opportunity to get together and to study Scripture. God, as we study I pray that through the lives of Jacob and Leah and Rachel and their children and their maidservants and the insanity of what's going on in their life, God, that you would instruct us vicariously through their example both positive and negative, and God, we thank you that you are brutally honest with us. As we read the Scripture today we see that Moses, your servant, by the power of the Holy Spirit is speaking and communicating and writing to us with brutal honesty. God, may we come to you this morning with the same brutal honesty that you come to us. May we be as honest about our lives as Moses is about the lives of this patriarch and his wives and their children, and God, when all is said and done, may you be gracious to us as you were to them. We ask it in Jesus' good name. Amen.

~~With, looking at the world of Jacob, that is, the story starts with his grandpa, and what Genesis shows us at this point is the third generation of faith, and this is important because for many of us we only think of our relationship with God as a very personal thing, which it is, that only involves us, which it does, but it's much more than that. We want our families and then our children and our grandchildren to also know and love God, and we need to be thinking generationally. We need to be thinking in terms of legacy.~~

And what we're dealing with today is that the first generation of faith was Abraham and Sarah back in the end of Genesis of 11 and the beginning of Genesis 12. God saved them. He elected them. He called them out from the nations of the earth to make them his people. He promised them that they would have a son. They waited some years to have that son. When that son didn't arrive, Sarah took matters into her own hands, got another woman, sent that woman to bed with Abraham who willingly slept with her, gave birth to a son named Ishmael who's the father of the Arabs, and to this day there's great hostility between Jews and Arabs because of that family conflict. God, however, some years later was faithful to his promise and allowed Sarah to conceive, gave birth to her son, Isaac.

So then the story turned, and we looked at the second generation of faith, that being Isaac. Isaac married a beautiful woman named Rebekah whom he loved very much, and she knew the Lord, and much like his mother, Sarah, she was both beautiful and barren, unable to conceive. What Isaac did was pray to God rather than take matters into his own hands and try and father a child with another woman. So they waited many years and prayed, and they didn't repeat the sins of his father, and ultimately, Jacob's grandfather. Eventually, God enabled his wife to conceive. Isaac and Rebekah conceived. They gave birth to two sons, Jacob and Esau.

And then the scene moved to the third generation of faith with Jacob and Esau, twin boys. Jacob is a believer, but he hides it well. He's got some major character flaws, and Esau is an unbeliever. Jacob was a trickster. We looked at how he stole the birthright and the blessing from his brother, and as a coward he ran for his life to Uncle Laban's house. We looked at last week how now as a 70, 80-something-year-old, late blooming, underachiever who hits puberty in the retirement years finally grows up and decides he will take a wife. He works for seven years to pay the bride price. He then marries – he thinks he marries this beautiful woman who he adores. Her name is Rachel, but somehow her father, his uncle, swapped out the lovely Rachel for the much less lovely Leah, and he woke up, and he was married to Leah, and he had been tricked by Laban, the great conman. So he works another seven years to marry Rachel.

And where we find the story this week is the third generation of faith has some serious problems, and we meet Jacob as an elderly man who has two wives who are sisters. Ladies, do you see the potential conflict that could come into the home if, per se, you and your sister were married to the same man? That's where we're gonna go this week. What you will look at this week is seven-plus years of this family, a man with two sisters, and he is married to both. Between the two women and their servants they will birth 12 children in about seven years through four women and one man, okay? Many of these women are obviously pregnant at the same time. Jacob is a believer; he doesn't go to hell, but he gets a little taste of it with three or four women (Laughter) pregnant with his babies in his house at the same time. Brutal, so that's where we pick up the story with Jacob the gigolo this week (Laughter) and his two wives, two girlfriends, their twelve kids that they pump out in seven years. Praise the Lord.

~~He hates Leah. He despises her. He can't stand her. He can't look at her. This is what it's like. He can't look at her because he doesn't like the way she looks. He doesn't want to talk to her because he doesn't enjoy her company. He doesn't come home from work at a decent hour because he doesn't want to be there. He doesn't climb into her bed at night because he doesn't want to be near her. He is a man who despises, distains and deploras his wife. He hates her. Now, for some of you women this is very painful. On many levels this is a sermon most fitting for women. There are things in here for men, but it deals with wives who are sisters, and what you're going to see is that these sisters have great competition.~~

When the Lord saw that Leah was not loved," – okay, so he's got two wives, Rachel and Leah.

in Hebrew, he hates Leah. He despises her. He can't stand her. He can't look at her. This is what it's like. He can't look at her because he doesn't like the way she looks. He doesn't want to talk to her because he doesn't enjoy her company. He doesn't come home from work at a decent hour because he doesn't want to be there. He doesn't climb into her bed at night because he doesn't want to be near her. He is a man who despises, distains and deploras his wife. He hates her. Now, for some of you women this is very painful. On many levels this is a sermon most fitting for women. There are things in here for men, but it deals with wives who are sisters, and what you're going to see is that these sisters have great competition.

This is what marks many female relationships between sisters. The sisters are competitive. One is more attractive. One has an easier life. One is barren. One can have kids, and there's this competition and jealousy that creeps in. For you ladies, this is one of the few stories in the Bible that highlights a sibling relationship between sisters in any great detail, and what we find is that each woman has what the other wants. Rachel has beauty and love from her husband. That's what Leah wants is beauty and love from her husband, but what Leah has is an open womb that God enables to bear children. So she could be a mother, and Rachel's womb is closed, and that is the one thing that she wants. So the one wife wants love; the other wants children, and they're in competition for the husband.

And for some of you women this is a brutally painful story because you closely identify with Leah because you too are married to someone who doesn't love you, in fact, perhaps the word hatred is most fitting for your husband's feelings toward you. He hates you. He does not want to be married to you, does not want to go to bed with you, does not want to speak with you, does not want to grow old with you. It's painful to watch, but let's be honest. In many ways, Leah has done this to herself, and ladies, before you get completely sidetracked and frustrated and angry because you're identifying with Leah in her hurt that the man that she loves does not love her, ask yourself this question, "Has he ever loved her? Did he ever claim to love her? Did he ever attempt to love her?" No. He didn't love her. He wasn't attracted to her. He didn't want to marry her, and she tricked him by going to bed with him.

And it's interesting because so many see the Bible as so primitive and dated, yet some 4,000 years later so many women think just like Leah. So many women think, "If I trick him, he will eventually love me. If I go to bed with him, then he will love me." It's not true. Men and women are different. It's not that women are bad and men are good, but for women, most women, some women have been liberated through feminism, and now they're as perverted as men, but for most women, (Laughter) most normal women who haven't been destroyed by the culture we live in, they think that sex and love are related. Now, for men, men, you could testify. Do all men think this way? "We only go to bed with women we love." No, we only go to bed with women who are breathing. (Laughter) That's the criteria by which most men select their partners. "Oh, she's breathing, qualifies, good enough." Men will go to bed with women they hate. Men will go to bed with women they don't even know. Men will go to bed with perfect strangers. Most women won't. Most women, would you like to sleep with a stranger? No. Would you like to sleep with an enemy? No, most men, sure. (Laughter) Men and women are different. Most women see intimacy and love as related; men don't.

So here's what happens. Women who don't understand men think, "If I could get him to go to bed with me, or better still, if I could get pregnant with his children" – this is her thinking you will see – "then he will love me." No, we won't. "Well, he must love me. He's sleeping with me." It proves nothing. It proves nothing. This will come off as a very unpleasant and perhaps harsh sermon for many women because so many women are so wrong when it comes to understanding men. Most men – and this is gonna be a Christian man – most men just want to go to bed with somebody, and love doesn't need to factor in. You're gonna find that he repeatedly goes to bed with a woman he hates, and his heart never changes. He hates her to the end. He hates her every day that he is with her.

And, for me, let me tell you my heart in this. I love the women in this church very much. There are, perhaps, 2,000 unmarried women that call this church home, that call me their pastor. The vast majority of them – through my experience coming up on nine years pasturing this church – is that many women think just like Leah. "I want to be with that man. He doesn't really want to be with me. If I could trick him into being with me, he'll fall in love with me, especially if I'm really good in bed, and if that doesn't work, we'll have a child, and then his heart will change." No.

Ladies, pay careful attention to the painful life story of your sister, Leah. The reason why it is in your Bible is to teach you how not to get a man. It is better, ladies, to be single and never married than to be married to a man who hates you. Leah's goal is this. "I am unattractive and getting older. I want a husband." And she gets a husband who hates her. It would've been better for her to not have a husband. For all of you ladies who aspire to be a wife and mother, I say, well, praise be to God, and I pray that God would give you a man that loves you, but if a man who doesn't love you has the opportunity to become your husband through your trickery and deception, then you have made for yourself a very miserable life. You have gotten exactly what you wanted, a husband, and you've ruined your own life through that thing which you wanted most.

Ladies, don't make it your goal to get a husband. Make it your goal to be loved in marriage. Don't just get a guy. Get a guy who loves you, and if he doesn't love you don't go to bed with that man thinking that by sleeping with him or pumping out a few kids that his heart will change, and he will indeed love you, and don't believe the women's magazines which tell you otherwise. Go to any magazine rack. Pick up whatever version of the bible that is being promulgated by that false world view, and here's what it says, "Be really good in bed and pump out a few kids and men will be with you forever." It's just Leah writing all the articles. (Laughter) That's all it is. Every buy line should just say, "Leah." (Laughter)

He hates her. He hates her. He's always hated her. She tricked him into the marriage, and I'll tell you this about men. They don't like to be taken advantage of by women. They don't like to be deceived. They don't like to be tricked. They don't like to be manipulated. They don't like to be lied to. They don't like to be sucked into a relationship that they don't want to be in, and you may catch him, but he'll hate you. He'll feel like a caged animal. It's a sad story. This is one of the saddest stories in the whole Bible. It is so painfully honest, and the reason it's painfully honest is because God loves every woman, and God wants women to read Scripture and to grow in wisdom and not to fall into the same painful trap.

"The Lord saw that Leah was hated." It's nice though the Lord sees it, isn't it? It's nice that though her husband doesn't love her, God does. Though her husband doesn't pay attention to her, God does. Though her husband has given up on her, God hasn't. Her hope is gonna be in a relationship with God. "He opened her womb, but Rachel was barren." God enabled her to conceive and that was part of his blessing. So the loved wife can't have a baby. This is the third generation of infertility. The unloved woman, she is enabled by God to conceive. So here's what happens, and this is gonna set up great tension in the home, competitive sisters, wanting what the other has. "Leah became pregnant" – by who? By her husband, Jacob, who – how did he feel toward her? Hated her.

Ladies, just drill this deep. Just because he goes to bed with you doesn't mean that he loves you. I don't care if he says he loves you. He's just saying that so you'll go to bed with him. No men, amen, but they agree. Men are happy to go to bed with just about any woman. Women don't understand this. "He said he loved me." Or, "He went to bed with me? How could he be with me if he doesn't even like me? He must like me. He went to bed with me." Men go to bed with strangers and enemies. Men in this room this week went to bed with strangers and enemies.

"She gave birth to a son. She named him Reuben," – God sees my misery is what his name means. This poor kid's name is misery. (Laughter) This is a bummer. "Hi, I'm misery." (Laughter) Wow, at least God sees it. "Oh, yeah, he's miserable too. He saw the whole thing." (Laughter) What you're gonna find with Leah is she's a believer, and when she births children, for the most part, she names them in reference to God. So we get the impression from the story that Leah is a little more Godly than Rachel which isn't saying a lot. That's like being the tallest jockey, right? (Laughter) It's not that impressive. It's not that big of a deal, but Leah does come off a little more Godly than Rachel. She names her kids after the Lord. "And she says, 'It is because the Lord has seen my misery.'" Her life is miserable, but she can't just cry foul and victim. The reason it's miserable is she roped a guy into a marriage that he didn't want to be in in the first place.

As a pastor I've dealt with this so many times. It's so painful. A man and a woman come into the office for a meeting. This has happened 100 times, meets with me or one of the elders and the woman's crying, "He doesn't love me. He hates me. He looks at other women. He looks at pornography. He doesn't come home at night. He despises me. He says mean things to me. He's not nice to me. My life is miserable." You look at the guy. You say, "What happened?" He said, "I've never liked her. We were sleeping together, and she got pregnant to make me stick around, and I hate her for that." Or, "We went to bed together, and then I felt guilty, and I married her, but she suckered me into it." Well, you're not a victim either. Not like, "I was walking down the street, tripped, and the next thing I know I'm naked with a woman." (Laughter) I mean, you invested yourself in this too, but the woman's like, "Well, all I wanted was to be loved, and I loved him, and I wanted to be with him, and I made it" – you made it happen. You made your own life miserable. You got the man who didn't want you. So many women have miserable lives, but so many of those women have made their own lives miserable. It's just brutally painful.

She names her first child misery because that's her life. That's the life she's made for herself, and I love Leah. I feel sad for her. I feel sorry for her. Proverbs says that the earth is held up by certain columns and pillars, one of which is that husbands love their wives, and when a wife is unloved the whole earth collapse and crumbles. This is a big deal. I've got two daughters. I don't want this for my daughters. I got two sisters. I don't want this for my sisters. I have one wife, unlike Jacob. I don't want this for my wife. But, ladies, be so careful that you don't trick a man into marriage using sexuality to cause him to be committed to you when in his heart he doesn't really love you, and so many think, wrongly, "If I'm good in bed or have children, he will love me." No, he'll love you if he loves you, and if he doesn't love you, performing in the bedroom or popping out children will not change his heart.

You need to own that and accept that. That's why some of you ladies should just dump the guys that you came here with and stop going to bed with them thinking that if you go to bed long enough their hearts will change, okay? And I know that some 2,000 women that call this church home are single, unmarried and trying to figure out what their future might be. That's why this is so important for us as a church to understand this. "She says, 'Surely my husband will' – what – 'love me.'" How painful is that to read, women? "He hates me. I'll be really good in bed. He still hates me. I'll give him a son. Look, it's your son. Do you love me now?" "No. I love my son, and I still hate you."

See, a lot of women put children between them and the husband thinking that that will pull the husband closer to them. It may not. It may not. A man can love his children and still hate his wife. Some men in this room do. This is painful. This is a woman using children to cause her husband to fall in love with her. This is a woman who thinks, "If I get pregnant, then we'll live happily ever after." No. "She conceived again," – how? This isn't the Virgin Mary. Jacob keeps going to bed with a woman he hates. It's brutally honest. It is painfully real. Some of you women, you think, "He loves me." No, he just keeps going to bed with you. It doesn't mean anything.

"She conceived again and gave birth to a son, and she says, 'Because the Lord heard that I am not loved,' – she's still not loved. She got married, went to bed, had a son, still not loved. What does that tell you? Just because he says, "I do," just because he consummates the marriage, and just because you give him a son, if he doesn't love you, he doesn't love you. It's between you and him. "Because the Lord has heard that I am not loved he gave me this one too." So she named him Simeon" – which means God hears. God hears her cry, weep, pray, lament. This is a lonely woman. Her husband doesn't listen to her. He doesn't want anything to do with her. Only God watches her life, and only God listens to her words. This is sad.

Forty percent of kids tonight go to bed without a father. What does that mean? Well, that means that a lot of women think like Leah, and a lot of men act like Jacob. This is the world we live in. "Again she conceived," – he keeps going to bed with her – "and when she gave birth to a son she says, 'Now at last my husband will become attached to me, because I have given him three sons.'" She's gone from, "He'll love me," to, "I think he'll stick around." This is the hope for a lot of women, "If we have enough kids, and I'm a good mother, even though he doesn't like looking at me or talking to me or being with me, he'll stick around because he's a Christian, and he'll do it for the sake of the kids." Sad to say, not anymore, the divorce rate among Christians higher than non-Christians, statistically, 'cause women think, "How could a guy walk out on his kids?" It's not right, just like it's not right for a man to go to bed with a woman he doesn't love. Men sin one way; women sin another.

So many women think, "I could never imagine not being committed to my husband for the sake of our children." So many men are able to bifurcate the children from the wife and say, "I love the children; I hate the wife. They're different to me. They're unrelated." That's why women respond with birth control and abortion. That's why we have a foster care system. That's why the world we live in is the way that it is, that women want to keep acting like Leah, and if it doesn't work out, then there's still a way for them to not have to deal with the implications. It's amazing, 4,000 years later the story is absolutely relevant to life on the earth today because a lot of things change, but men and women don't. How sad is that, ladies? "If I give him enough

sons, he'll come home at night. He'll stick around." He may stick around until the kids are 18 and then hit the eject button like a lot of guys and get his money and go be with someone he loves, or maybe he'll come home at night, but on the weekends or lunch hour he's off with his girlfriend. He's off at the strip club. There are guys even in this room who hate their wife, love their kids. The only reason they stick around is for the sake of the kids, and they're running around on the side and just going to bed with the woman because it's the thing they're supposed to do even though they despise her.

"So she named him Levi." You ever heard of the Levitical priesthood, the Old Testament priest, the book of Leviticus. Jesus Christ is the high priest, all that comes out of that boy, Levi. "She conceived again," – she conceived again. This now is a lifestyle. "This time I will praise the Lord." She has gone from, "My husband will love me." To, "My husband will put up with me." To, "Forget it. I'm just gonna thank God for the kid." She's just giving up on her husband. "That guy, he's just worthless. He doesn't love me, but at least I got a kid out of the deal." This is where a lot of women slip into. "My marriage stinks. My husband stinks. I'm not happy. I'm just gonna enjoy my kids and thank God for my kids."

"So she named him Judah" – which means praise God. Isn't it sad when a woman doesn't get love from her husband so she has sons, and she's thankful because at least she'll get affection from her boys? This is a beginning of a very troubled family system. "Then she stopped having children." We don't know why. It's just quiet. We don't know why. Maybe God closed her womb. Maybe – and this is my speculation – maybe Jacob didn't go to bed with her anymore. Maybe Jacob said, "Well, she's had a few kids. She's put on a few pounds. She looks worse than ever. I didn't like her in the first place. I'm done with her." We don't know. Either God closes her womb or Jacob stopped going to bed with her, but either way the one good part of her life stopped. She couldn't have kids anymore.

So then the scene transitions to her sister, Rachel. When Rachel saw she was not bearing Jacob any children she became jealous of her sister. How many of you sisters or sisters in Christ get jealous because the ladies you know are having babies, and you're not having a baby? You have infertility. It's a big issue. My wife had a miscarriage. Twenty, twenty-five percent of all conceptions, they say statistically, end in miscarriage. A lot of women desperately want to be a mom, and they can't, and it's frustrating. So they get jealous of other women. I remember talking to a woman not too long ago. She said, "It's just really hard for me to come to church and see all the pregnant ladies and the little kids running around." I said, "Well, that means you're jealous. You're supposed to be glad that these women can be mothers. Now you could shed your tears that you haven't become a mother yet; that's okay, but don't resent women who are mothers." That's a bitter heart. That's a bitter heart.

And so Rachel wants kids, not just because she wants kids, but to keep up with her sister. This is the weirdest dinner ever, right? One side of the table is Rachel. The other side is Leah and all her boys, and Leah keeps looking over at Rachel, "Oh, don't they look good? They're so handsome. They're getting so big. Isn't it – it would be nice if they had some cousins, wouldn't it?" (Laughter) Yeah, this gets funky and nasty and mean. "So she says to Jacob, 'Give me children, or I'll die!'" Now isn't it curious that she cusses him out for this. How many ladies are like this? They cuss out the husband for things he doesn't have, you know, here's Jacob, "Hey, look, I go to bed with you. I go to bed with Leah. Leah's got a lot of kids. You got no kids. Obviously, I'm working. I'm fine." (Laughter) "Obviously you would be the complication. You have some problems, you know? I don't have the key to your home. It's not under my control."

How many women though, they just cuss their husband out for stuff that's not even their husband's fault? Now she could cuss her husband out for a whole bunch of other stuff, rightfully so, but here, "You give me kids, or I'll die!" And those words become prophetic because in Genesis 35:16-19 with the birth of the 12th son to these two women and their servants, the birth of Benjamin, she dies in childbearing. It becomes painfully prophetic down the road. "Jacob became angry with her, 'Am I in the place of God, who has kept you from having children?'" This is the only time Jacob talks about God. What he doesn't say is, "Well, let's pray, sweetheart, or you're a little emotional; let me hold you. I bought flowers. Do you want to go to a bed and breakfast?" Nothing – here's what he says, "Don't cuss me out. Cuss God out. It's his fault. Look, I got kids everywhere." (Laughter) Right? He's such a great head of the home, isn't he? What a guy. He should teach a class at his local church on how to be a dad, how to be a husband. He's just such an exemplary guy. "Hey, don't cuss me out. Cuss out Jesus. Hey, I'm going to bed with you. I'm doing my part."

This is the only time he invokes God in the whole thing. The guy is just – he's a pervert. He's a dirty old man. He's in his 80s. He's going to bed with a woman he doesn't love. The other woman can't get pregnant, and rather than praying for – and it's interesting because when his momma was barren, his daddy prayed for her, and God opened the womb. That's how Jacob got here, and what he doesn't do is pray for his wife. He yells at her and tells her to cuss out God. This is a painful story. It goes on. "Then she said," – what now is gonna happen is Rachel can't bear children. So she's gonna make the same mistake that Grandma Sarah made – 'Let's get a maidservant' – Here's it's Bilhah; there it was Hagar. "You can go to bed with her, and then she'll give me a baby." This is the same mistake that the grandparents made. "Here is Bilhah, my maidservant. Sleep with her so she can bear children for me and that through her I too can build a family."

So she gave him her servant as a wife. "I can't sleep with her. We're not married." "There you go. You're married. Now go to bed with her." And he slept with her. Okay. Here's Jacob, "Honey, you want me to go to bed with this other girl? Okay. Okay. If that's what you need, I love you. I'm willing to prove it. Whatever you need, baby. Tell her to wear something in black." (Laughter) How many of you guys read this and you go, "That's my fantasy." Ah, you perverts, now wait. You guys – how many guys are like Jacob? Okay, we read this, and we go, "Jacob just went to – he's already got two women. That seems like enough. He's gonna pick up two more."

See, these are the pornos guys watch. These are the fantasies guys have. This is an unbelieving man. It doesn't mean it's right or justified, but how many guys, it's not whether or not it's pleasing in God's sight, as long as your wife will go along with it, you're down? If your wife came and said, "Hey, let's watch porno. Hey let's go to a strip club. Hey, how about if I bring a girlfriend over?" How many guys would be like, "It's her idea. I'm a victim." (Laughter) Right? This is the guy fantasy come true. Jacob takes the deal. He's a sinful man. It's wrong. I'll tell you what, guys. If your wife's a pervert, it's still not okay. If your wife has a perverted idea, it's still not okay because ultimately, you answer to God. So many men, this is their fantasy.

You will see Leah gets what she wants, a husband. It becomes a nightmare. Jacob gets what he wants, multiple women in the bedroom. It becomes a

nightmare. Sometimes it's getting exactly what we want that causes the most trouble in our life because we're fools, and we think we know what we need. "Jacob slept with her, and she became pregnant and bore him a son." Okay, now you're gonna find out all these kids are born in about seven years. This is a busy old man, very busy. "Then Rachel said, 'God has vindicated me' – now she's gonna talk about God – 'he has listened to my plea and given me a son.' Because of this she named him Dan" – which means God vindicates. "Thank you, Jesus. The girlfriend worked." And it's amazing, isn't it, sometimes when we sin, if it works we justify it. "Well, I know I wasn't supposed to sleep with him, but he got saved. See, that's what God wanted. Well, I know I wasn't supposed to steal or lie, but it ended up working out for good, so it must've been God's will." Believers do this all the time. We sin, and then if it works in our definition of work, we legitimize it and say, "Well, praise God. He vindicated me." No. God cares about means and ends, and here her means are deplorable, and you will find that she thinks her ends are good. Her ends end up being deplorable as well. The story goes on, "Rachel's servant Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son." Okay, at this point he's juggling three women. "Then Rachel said, 'I have had a great struggle with my sister,' – this is back to, like, Jacob and Esau, sibling struggle – 'and I have won.'" She proclaims victory. Like there's a star chart on the fridge, you know? (Laughter) I mean, I kinda get the picture, it's like you go to the Mariner's game, and they have hydro races and the blue one and the yellow one and the red one, and Leah's is way out front, and then her boat flips over, and then Rachel crosses the finish line and cheers and spills her beer, you know? I mean, you kinda get that picture of the whole, (Laughter) "I won. I have more kids, so I win." Like kids are a competition – "So she named him Naphtali" – which means my struggle. These kids misery, struggle, I mean, these kids got peculiar names. "When Leah saw that she had stopped having children," – well, she's not gonna be outdone. We need more women. (Laughter) We need more women. I mean, it's crazy. It's like she's calling the bull pen, "Yeah, bring in the lefty. Bring in the lefty. We need the lefty." (Laughter) What in the heck?

"When Leah saw she had stopped having children she took her maidservant Zilpah and gave her to Jacob as a wife." "Well, okay, it's a wife. There you go. Lefty in from the bull pen, go get me some more kids. I want another star on my chart on the fridge. Leah's is getting – ooh, she's out ahead. I gotta catch up." "Leah's servant Zilpah bore Jacob a son." Now he's up to four women. So many guys in this room, this is fantasy land. This is dream come true. "Four women all know I'm going to bed with the other women, and now they're competing with one another to be with me" – dream come true. "Then Leah said," – what good luck – "What good fortune!" – up to till this point she named all her kids after relationship to God. Now, she just goes completely pagan. "So she named him Gad" – which means good luck. "Oh, I have good luck." It's like naming your kid Vegas or Reno or lotto. You know, it's, "I have good luck." (Laughter) No thank you, Jesus. No praise God. Good luck.

How many believers though, they do something sinful. It works. Rachel says, "Thanks, God, for blessing my sin." Leah says, "Ah, this doesn't have anything to do with God. It's just good luck. We believe in good luck." See, as believers, we don't believe in good luck. We believe in good God. She believes in good luck. She is a believer, but she's got some serious problems. All of them do. "Leah's servant Zilpah bore Jacob a second son. Then Leah said, 'How happy I am!' – I'm back in the lead – 'The women will call me happy.' So she named him Asher" – which means happy. "I'm happy. I'm winning." Amazing, isn't it, ladies, how sometimes competition with sisters can get petty? "I'm prettier. I'm skinnier. I've got more kids. My husband makes more money." I mean, just this sort of major competition creeps in, and now she's happy, not because God gave her a kid, not because her marriage is good, but because she's beating her sister.

"During wheat harvest, Reuben" – which means God sees – "went out into the fields and found some mandrake plants, which he brought to his mother Leah." These are like plums. They're small food to eat. You like mandrakes? They do. This is a crazy story. This is one of the weirdest things I've ever read, and I read a lot. "Rachel said to Leah, 'Please give me some of your son's mandrakes,' but she said to her, 'Wasn't it enough that you took away my husband? Will you take my mandrakes too?' – (Laughter) this is weird. This is a little peculiar, like these are adult sisters who are arguing like little girls again. "Oh, you stole my husband just like you stole my Lincoln Logs when I was four, and I hate you for that, and I want you to die." (Laughter) "That was my Barbie. You took the Barbie. You're evil." (Laughter) You cannot have the strawberries till I get the Barbie back from when I was four." This is just this weird – any of you have these stupid arguments with your siblings? "Remember when you took the GI Joe? I know we're 76, but I've never forgiven you. I still hate you for that. Every time I see a soldier, I cry." (Laughter) "It hit deep."

"Very well," Rachel said, 'he can sleep with you if you give me the mandrakes.'" "You took my husband. You took my fruit." "I'll give you the fruit if I can sleep with him." "Okay. I really like fruit. I really like mandrakes a lot. Are they fresh? I'll let you sleep with him." (Laughter) Now, at this point you kinda get the impression like Jacob isn't really the head of his home anymore. He's kinda lost control at this point. (Laughter) How did he lose control? He keeps going to bed. This is how men lose control. That's why a lot of women in the dating phase – now it gets all quiet, and for the two women that come back next week this will change your life – (Laughter) but you need to know this, men, some women manipulate through the bedroom. They do. Now they're ticked 'cause I told you. (Laughter) Right? These women are manipulating through the bedroom, and Jacob's like, "Well, you know, I mean, they're evil, and they're ruining everything, and it's a mess, but four women go to bed with me so I'm gonna roll with it. That's what I'm gonna do. I'm gonna just let it all fall apart because I get to go to bed with four women."

Here's what happens. Rachel's brokering the deal. Apparently this bedroom has gotten so busy she is like a personal assistant with an Excel spreadsheet scheduling appointments, and you can't get an appointment unless you go through Rachel. It's like you're at the DMV, you know, "Now serving number four." You're sitting there all day with your little number waiting for your turn to go be with the crazy old man. (Laughter) Does this bother anyone else? This is profoundly troubling. You got the one wife scheduling appointments for the other women. (Laughter) How many of you before today if I said, "Jacob," you'd say, "Yeah, he's a Godly man. He's a great guy. He's in the Bible. We worship the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – Jacob, yeah, Jacob, superhero." The guy's a terrible father, terrible husband, terrible leader, dirty old man with four women scheduling appointments. Mandrakes too, here's why they want to use the mandrakes. It was believed to be a source of fertility. It was superstition. Paul talks in the New Testament about old wives' tales. This is one of those. "Oh, if you eat mandrake's you'll get pregnant." Well, it's not true, but for them, they think this is, like, Viagra 1.0. This is like the beta version of fertility. So, "Oh, I'll have some mandrakes, and then he'll sleep with me, and then I'll have kids." You're gonna see that she has kids, but the Bible tells us here that it's by God's grace, not because of the mandrakes. "So when Jacob came in from the fields that evening, Leah ran out to meet him. 'You must sleep with me,' – (Laughter) when the marriage has deteriorated to that point, you really got problems. Like, most men, their wives don't need to say, "You have to sleep with me or else." Most guys don't require that much coercion, you know?

Why – ‘I have hired you.’” (Laughter) “I’m your wife. We’re going to bed. I paid good money for it.” (Laughter)

All right, this is where the relationship is so deteriorated that for her to even get any intimacy with her husband she has to earn it through manipulation. “‘I have hired you with my son’s mandrakes.’ So he slept with her.” Like, “Oh, mandrakes, well, four mandrakes? I’m a four mandrake man? What do you do, you know? Those are good mandrakes. I mean, you know, she paid.” (Laughter) It’s a bizarre family. I know your family’s messed up; it’s not that bad really. This one has got serious issues. Dr. Phil would just have a heart attack and fall off the stool. (Laughter) “God listened to Leah,” – apparently Leah talks to God. She’s praying – “she became pregnant, bore Jacob a fifth son. Then Leah said, “God has rewarded me for giving my maidservant to my husband.’ – again, she’s doing the same thing. Oh, you know, that girlfriend that I brought in, that was a good idea. God really favored on that. No, God doesn’t favor that kind of thing. God doesn’t want me to have four wives. You know, God doesn’t want Jacob to have four wives, but she justifies her sin – “So she named him Issachar” – which means God’s reward – a lot of kids.

“Leah conceived again, bore Jacob a sixth son.” Now she’s really out in front. “Then Leah said, ‘God has presented me with a precious gift’ – that’s true. That’s true. Children are a precious gift. Children are a gift from God. We saw early in Genesis that children are a blessing from the Lord. She does understand that children are a blessing, but she still doesn’t operate like a Godly woman should. Children are a precious gift from the Lord, and in our city there is less children per capita under the age of five than any city in the US other than San Francisco according to the 2000 census. We’re not a city that believes children a blessing. A Wall Street Journal article a few weeks ago said we have more dogs than children in Seattle. We believe dogs are a precious gift from the Lord, and children are kinda a hassle. That’s, kind of, Seattleque. She’s got it right. She says this child is a precious gift, but the way she got this child, and the example she’s setting for this child is a mess, okay?

And this is what some Christian families do. They say, “We’re pro-life. We love children.” Okay, good, good, good, good, good, but are you acting Godly, being a good parent and setting a good example? It’s not enough just to believe that children are a blessing. You also gotta be a good parent with a decent marriage to bring the child up in. Otherwise it’s just hypocrisy – “This time my husband will treat me with honor, because I have borne him six sons.” She’s gone from, “He’ll love me,” to, “He’ll put up with me,” to, “At least he’ll say thank you.” This is a woman who doesn’t live in a grace-centered relationship where her husband just loves her. She has to merit everything. She has to earn his affection. This is the most painful kind of marriage to where the husband doesn’t just love unless she works really hard like birthing six sons. He still doesn’t love her. He still isn’t affectionate and tender toward her. So many people think that the kids hold the marriage together. It doesn’t. It doesn’t. And when the kids leave, there’s nothing there.

“She named him Zebulun” – which means honor. “Some time later she gave birth to a daughter and named her Dinah” – which means justice. All together they’re gonna have twelve sons and one daughter. I know one family it’s the inverse. They have twelve kids and one son. This family, as confused as it is, will have twelve sons, one daughter. Dinah’s name means justice. She’s gonna be the focal point in Genesis 34. A boy does something to her that he shouldn’t. I don’t want to get too far into it. Her brothers go out seeking justice and murder a bunch of other men. So her name is prophetic in nature, and indeed surrounding her is justice.

And the last section of verses, “Then God remembered Rachel.” It’s interesting, isn’t it? God hasn’t forgot about her. He hasn’t abandoned her. Even though she’s not a great woman, God’s still mindful of her. “He listened to her” – apparently Rachel prayed – finally. You know, and the point is, ladies, if you struggle with infertility, miscarriage, you want to be a mom. I’m not saying don’t go see a doctor. I’m not saying don’t go see a specialist, don’t do whatever you can medically or hormonally or physically. What I am saying though is start with prayer. So many people don’t pray until it’s the fourth quarter, and there’s 30 seconds on the clock, and they’re down by 27, and they say, “We gotta call God. This is a problem.” No, you should’ve called God early on in the game. She doesn’t dial in to God till late in the game, but God still listened – “opened her womb. She became pregnant and gave birth to a son and says, ‘God has taken away my disgrace.’” Isn’t that amazing? In that culture, to not have a culture was disgraceful. In our culture, it’s interesting, it’s almost disgraceful to have a child. You’re ruining the planet and all. “She named him Joseph,” – Joseph is gonna figure prominently from Genesis 38-50. He becomes one of the most important characters in Genesis – the Bible for that matter – “and she said, ‘May the Lord add to me another son.’” At this point, there’s eleven sons, one daughter. God is gonna answer her prayer, give her another son. Benjamin will be born in Genesis 35. That then leads to twelve sons, one daughter through four women. Those 12 boys become what? The 12 tribes of Israel. Now walking in here today, if I said, “Today I’m gonna tell you about the 12 tribes of Israel and the family that raised them to change the world,” would you have expected this? No. This is a Jerry Springer episode. This is not what you would’ve expected. You would not have expected these kids, these sons who grow up to change the world and become the 12 tribes of Israel, the precursor to the 12 disciples and the new covenant. The nation of Israel is founded on these 12 sons. The Levitical priesthood come out of Levi. The kingly line comes out of Judah. You wouldn’t have expected all this, but that’s where they came from. The 12 sons become the 12 tribes of Israel. Now, what God promises as well is that through this family line, this crazy family line would come Jesus Christ, and it started back in Genesis 12 and Genesis 15, back with these boys great grandpa, Abraham. God said, “I will bless you. I’ll give you many descendents. All the nations on the earth will be blessed because through you will come a son.”

So what happens is through the line of Abraham comes these 12 boys who become Abraham’s 12 grandsons. One of these sons is gonna be the one picked through whom Jesus Christ will be born to Mary, and that God will come into human history to take away sin, sin of people like this, manipulative, controlling women, perverted old men, dysfunctional family systems, unforgiven, unrepented bitterness and anger to deal with these kinds of things, things in your life, things in my life, things in their life. Which child is it that God selects out of these 12 boys to become the one that would lead to the coming of Jesus; do you remember? It’s Judah. I’ll show it to you in Genesis 49:10 coming up at the end of the book. It says, “The scepter” – and it talks about the staff. These are the accoutrements of a king who rules. So we’re talking about a king. “The scepter will not depart from Judah,” – so through the line of Judah – now who was Judah’s mom? Leah, the hated woman, isn’t that amazing? A hated woman who knows the Lord has a life that’s filled with some sin and problems. She’s a troubled woman. God allows her to give birth to a son, Judah, who grows up to lead the line of kings that leads to Jesus Christ who is a descendent of Judah and a descendent of the unloved Leah.

Jacob didn’t love Leah, but God does. Jacob didn’t honor Leah, but God does. Jacob didn’t do justice and kindness and mercy toward Leah, but God does – “nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet until he comes to whom it belongs” – he, so a son is coming that will be the king – “and the nations will be obedient to him.” Here’s the promise. Leah gave birth to Judah. Through Judah will come a man who will be a king that will rule over the

nations as King of kings, Lord of lords. That's gonna be Jesus. Two thousand years after this Jesus comes. Hebrews talks about this, but "About the Son" – that's about Jesus – "he says, 'Your throne, oh, God.'" So Jesus is God. That's what he's saying. The promise was given in Genesis 3:15, "God is coming as a man." Promise is given Genesis 12 and 15 to Abraham, "God is coming as a man." Leah gives birth to Judah who is a grandson of Abraham. The promise is then made in Genesis 49:8-10, "Jesus is coming through the line of Judah."

Jesus comes. He is the Son of God. He's God. He's God. God becomes a man, comes into human history, why? Well, to live without sin, to die for our sin, to rise to conquer Satan, sin and death, to what? To straighten out all the sin that's been made crooked in the world, to take away our own sin because you know what; here's what we've learned from each of these people in the story. We ruin ourselves. We destroy ourselves. We devastate ourselves. We make a mess of our own life. We need to be saved from ourselves. Leah, Rachel, Jacob, yeah, they sinned against each other, but the truth is they each contributed to the degeneration of the quality of their own life and family, and Jesus comes to save us from ourselves. "About the Son he says, 'Your throne, oh, God.'" So Jesus is King and God, and it will last forever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom. That's the promise from Leah to Judah to Jesus. Two thousand years later Jesus came as King of kings, Lord of lords to conquer sin and death, to forgive us.

Then in Revelation 19 it says this. 'Cause the first coming was about Jesus, sort of, establishing his kingdom and putting his scepter of rule in the ground, as it were, and staking his claim that he is the King and this is his kingdom, and on his second coming which Revelation 19 speaks of, it speaks of his eternal reign as the perfect King, through the line of Judah, the line of kings. "Out of his mouth," – Jesus – "comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. He will rule them with an iron scepter" – back to the promise in Genesis that was given through the son, Judah. "He treads the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written, 'King of kings, Lord of lords' – King of kings, Lord of lords. A descendent of Leah and Jacob, a dirty old man and an unloved, hated woman who was a manipulator that conned him into a fake marriage, through that Jesus comes.

If you keep reading, the second to the last chapter in the Bible, we go from Genesis, the book of beginnings, to Revelation, the book of conclusions, the second to the last chapter in Revelation is Revelation 21, and it explains heaven, the kingdom of God, God's eternal rule in perfection. What it likens it to is a beautiful city, and the city is surrounded with walls, and each of the walls has spaced apart on it 12 different gates to enter into and exit from the city, to go into the presence of God, to live forever without sin, without death, without injustice, no more tears, no more crying, no more suffering, no more pain. Twelve gates mark heaven. What do you think is written on each of those 12 gates? The names of each of these 12 sons – the names of each of these 12 sons.

For you and I that love the Lord Jesus, and he has taken away our sin, and he is our King, and he is our Lord, and he has come to establish his kingdom, and we now have been brought in as citizens of his kingdom and the church as part of his reign on the earth. One day he will come again, and he will judge his enemies, and he will bless his children, and he will take them into his eternal kingdom where we get to see him seated on the throne, and to get there we must pass through a gate to enter into the holy city, and on the gate we will pass through we will see the names of these boys. We'll see Judah. We'll see Levi. We'll see Joseph, their names written on the gates of heaven.

Why? How does this happen? How does a dirty, 80-some-year-old man birth 12 sons and one daughter with four wives, one of whom he hates, the other two he scarcely even acknowledges, just uses them for a good time, and one woman he loves who schedules his bedroom appointments in competition with her sister and pimps out her own husband for a handful of fruit. How does that family become so well known that today we worship the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob? How does that family become so prominent that those 12 boys become the 12 tribes of the nation of Israel? They become the boys through whom the world is forever changed, and upon entering into the kingdom of God you and I will see their names each inscribed on one of 12 gates, and we will worship the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob.

This is what we call grace. If I could just state the obvious, this is all grace. This family does not deserve to bring God, the Lord Jesus Christ, into human history. This family does not deserve to walk into heaven and see the names of their sons written on the gates into the heavenly city. None of these people has the right to stand before God and to claim that they're good people, that they've changed the world. What we see is that these are frail, mortal, wicked, foolish, perverted, petty, bitter, regular folk just like you and me. They're not superheroes. They don't get red capes. They don't move faster. They don't lift things that are heavy, or they don't think better. They don't act wiser than any of us. They're incredibly frail, mortal, regular people. It saddens me when other religions, and I don't want to denigrate the people in those religions, but their belief systems of things like Islam and Judaism look back and say, "Oh, we love Abraham. We love Isaac. We love Jacob. They're our heroes." They're not our heroes. They're our examples. They're our examples of grace. They're our examples of what God can do for someone who is very sinful, if indeed he should embrace them, and they should embrace him.

You don't want to put your faith in Abraham. You don't want to put your faith in Isaac. You don't want to put your faith in Jacob. You don't want to put your faith in Judah. You want to put your faith in the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. His name is Jesus, King of kings, Lord of lords. He saves us from ourselves. He bestows on us dignity and honor and blessing that like Leah we don't deserve and wouldn't be given to us apart from grace, and he'll use even our sins and our errors and our folly and our perversion and our evil like Rachel and Jacob to work out good things on the earth because he is a good God.

So at this point we always bring it down to where I leave it between you and Jesus. For some of you, you become a Christian today, and it starts with you like Abraham. You're the first generation of faith, and your hope is to see faith pass down as a legacy through your family. For some of you, you're second generation or third generation. For some of you, you identify with Leah. You're not loved. For some of you, you identify with Rachel. You're beautiful, but life isn't as easy as everyone thought it would be. Some of you identify with Jacob. You're just a pervert, and your lusts have caused your life to spin absolutely out of control, and today I call you all to the Lord Jesus, and what I want you to do is I want you to get some time in prayer with him and name your sin as brutally and as clearly and as frankly as Moses does the lives of these people. This is so brutally honest because without God being totally honest we would absolutely miss the point of grace, and God wants us to be as honest with him now as he has been with us. To confess our sins, give them to the Lord Jesus, the King of kings, Lord of lords. He's coming again. He's coming again to crush those who oppose him, to love those who embrace him.

So I'm gonna call you to prayer. I'm gonna call you to time with Jesus for you and your family and the generations to come. When you're ready, you could partake of communion, which is remembering Jesus' body and blood shed for our sin. You can give your tithes and offerings, and then we're gonna sing, and we're gonna celebrate, why? Well, because there's good news. There's grace. There's grace. I know some of you came from homes that looked like this. By grace you can live a life like the Godly Joseph. You could repent and be transformed like Judah. By grace – by grace all things are possible, and by grace there's hope. By grace there's not only hope, there's assurance that God is a good God, and that those who belong to him will be given the kind of grace that enables them to be new people with new lives, new legacies, new futures, new eternities, and we worship that God, the God of grace.

Father God, as we go into our time of prayer and reflection, I confess my own sins, God. Like everyone else here, the story is very painfully real. God, I pray for those of us who are like Jacob. Because of our lust we have lost control. Because of our lust we have lost integrity. Because of our perversion life is spinning out of control. We have no one to blame but ourselves. God, I pray for those of us who identify with Leah. Life is hard because we're not loved. People hate us that are supposed to love us, friends and family. It's very lonely, and we're stuck on this wheel of performance trying to perform so that people would at least be nice to us, at least say something kind to us like, "thank you," and they don't. They still hate us or ignore us altogether.

God, I pray for those of us like Rachel. Life has gone well because we're attractive and gifted, but now because of our own foolishness and sin and pride and bitterness and pettiness we've made a mess of our own life, and we may be beautiful on the outside, but inwardly, there is great ugliness. God, I pray for those of us who were born into families like this. The parental situation is not impressive, and the home we were born into was highly troubled. God, I pray you would cause us to repent of our excuse making and embrace your hand and receive your grace and begin a first generation of faith like Abraham. God, we love you. I pray for the women in this church, God. I do love them very, very much. I know that Leah's story is incredibly painful. I pray they would learn it and learn it well. That God they –