

All in the Family - Finding the One - Genesis 29

When it comes to love I think our culture is very confused. What we often teach our kids is one day you're going to meet the one. Your prince charming is going to come and sweep you off your feet, and everything is going to be perfect from that moment forward. But the reality is, happily ever after doesn't always come in our lives or our marriages. Go ahead and make your way to Genesis 29 if you would please.

Today we're going to look at a pretty unusual story from the book of Genesis about a guy named Jacob and two ladies named Rachel and Leah. Let me give you the context. Jacob traveled to a well. At the well he saw his Uncle Laban's daughter, Rachel, and she was gorgeous. So immediately, probably because of her appearance, he falls in love with her. Now, if any of you are doing the math in your head, this was his uncle's daughter, which makes her his what? His cousin. So he sees his cousin and falls in love with her (Kentucky).

He's thinking to himself most likely, if I can marry this girl, my life will have meaning. I'm reading a little bit into the story, but if we put the pieces together, here's what we know. We know that Jacob never had the love of his father. Those of you who never had the love of your father, he was absent physically or emotionally; you know what that does in your life. It creates a longing and emptiness. We also know that Jacob lost the love of his mother. So, you can only imagine how that compounded what was going on in his heart. We also know that at this point in his life, he really didn't grasp the unconditional love of God. So, it is no wonder that when he sees this beautiful girl, he's probably thinking something along the lines of maybe she's the one. If I can just get married to her, then finally this relationship will fill the emptiness that I feel inside.

In our world today, this happens all of the time, doesn't it? Maybe you were the girl, or you know the girl that always felt inadequate and empty unless she had a boyfriend. If there wasn't a boyfriend, something was wrong. Or it could be the guy that has to have the beautiful girl so that all of his buddies think he's cool! Because without her he doesn't quite feel like he's who he should be. Or it could be the middle-aged guy, who had the faithful wife and kids and it was great for many years. But he gets bored with his job and doesn't feel handsome anymore and his hair is falling out and his gut is growing out. So, he trades in his faithful wife for a younger girl, who is really nothing more than a commodity to make him feel better about himself. "If I just have that relationship, then it will fill the emptiness that I feel so deeply inside." This is likely what was going on in Jacob's mind. Genesis 29:16-17,

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¹⁶ Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the older was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. ¹⁷ Leah had weak eyes, but Rachel had a lovely figure and was beautiful.

Many Hebrew scholars argue that this was a very polite way of saying that Leah wasn't attractive. When they say her eyes were weak, they don't contrast it with Rachel's strong eyes. Rachel had a lovely figure and was beautiful. Physical attraction is important, but I believe in our culture, physical attraction is often overvalued. Especially in a world where the external is often elevated to the highest point over and over again.

So often today, all that matters is how they look. Are they successful? What does the outside look like? At this point in the story that's about all Jacob knew. He's going to say that he's in love with her after only spending a month at her father's house. He didn't know her, and yet he's claiming to be in love with her. He's attracted to her and that's about it. It's important but it's not everything. This is likely what was going on with Jacob. He is thinking, my whole life is empty. If I can marry this one, then my life is finally going to matter. The bottom line of the whole message is this:

If Jesus is not the One in all areas of your life, there's no person, amount of money, job, hobby, possession, or substance that will fill the emptiness that only God himself can fill.

Now before I get into the outline of the message I want to explain who this message is for. This applies to students and young adults. Maybe you're in a relationship or you want to be and you think having that relationship is the answer to the void in your life. This applies to single adults. Maybe you lost your spouse. Maybe you're divorced. Maybe you've never been married. Maybe you have kids and maybe you don't. Maybe you see your singleness as a curse and you want desperately to find the one so that maybe you'll feel complete. This applies to those of us who are married; whether it is happily or unhappily. Maybe you're unhappily married and you're tempted to seek another outlet thinking that will make you feel better. Even if you're happily married I pray that Jacob's life and story will encourage you to stay focused on the One that matters. There's nothing wrong with wanting to find the one. We all want to find the one. The problem occurs when we lose sight of who the one should be.

3 Problems of Seeking the Wrong One:

1. We give up more than we should.

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¹⁸ Jacob was in love with Rachel and said, "I'll work for you seven years in return for your younger daughter Rachel."

In that culture, that was way more time than was generally expected. Basically you've got a guy who's saying, "I will do anything for her! I'll give up more than I should." This is the same thing people do today. It could be someone who wants to wait until they're married and they meet someone else and they think this could be the one. But they begin to push the boundaries physically, deep down they know they shouldn't, but they think if I give them my body, maybe they'll give me their heart. They give up more than they should. I'll work seven years because I will do anything to have this one that will finally make me feel valuable.

2. We demand more than we should.

That's what Jacob did. He had worked his seven years, which is amazing. Verse 21.

²¹ Then Jacob said to Laban, "Give me my wife. My time is completed, and I want to make love to her."

File that under "things you shouldn't say to your future father-in-law". I did my part; now send her over here to do her part. You see how shallow this is? This is what happens in many marriages today. Rather than being a covenant where we lay down our lives, the marriage erodes into a contract. I deliver this, therefore you deliver this. As soon as that happens, our expectations of each other rise, and all of a sudden we are dissatisfied because they can never live up to the expectations. It can happen in any number of ways. Intimacy is a common one. I did this for you, so you do this for me! Or I'm mad at you, so I'm going to withhold certain things from you.

Maybe some men here are married to a demanding wife or maybe she's nitpicky about every little thing....you don't, you never, you always, you aren't! Women can be demanding and they can have all of these expectations which go uncommunicated, because women expect men to know. Let me just tell you ladies... we don't know! We don't know what you don't tell us! Even if you tell us slowly, we still might miss it, because we are men and we just aren't as smart as you ladies. Or it could be he's very demanding. Husband comes home, "Where's my dinner?" The wife's thinking, "Where could I hide the body?" He's like, "Draw me a bath and get me some grapes woman!" Obviously I'm exaggerating, but in marriage that's often what we do.

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Quite honestly, Angela can be very demanding of me. Every time I come home she's like, "Get over here you big stud!" I'm like, "Not again, please! I'm not a piece of meat!" All I want in the evening is to be held. Is that too much to ask? I can't even keep a straight face! But on a serious note I can be incredibly demanding. Angela truly is an incredibly loving and faithful wife and mother and I am blessed that she chose me. What I found is that even in a good marriage, it's so easy for us to say I did my part, now you do yours; when you believe that your spouse is the one who should meet all of your needs.

3. We end up emptier than when we started.

Some people enter into a relationship with so many expectations that there is no way that any one person could ever fulfill them all. What you've done is you have essentially set the other person up for guaranteed failure. That is what was going on in this story.

Jacob says I've got to marry this girl, she's beautiful. He works the seven years, they go to have the wedding. The uncle was sitting there thinking, I've got a problem. It's tradition to marry off the oldest daughter first (Leah). Jacob wants the younger one (Rachel), this is going to throw this whole thing off, she's not as attractive, I need to get her married. So, in the wedding feast of this time, they were big, often seven day parties. Chances were pretty good there was alcohol. Chances are better than average that Jacob had been celebrating. He's about to get the bride he had been working for and chances are pretty good that he was "under the influence".

The uncle was probably looking at this thing strategically and going; okay, he's wasted and he's not going to know what I'm about to do. So, he takes a bridal veil and puts it over Leah and says, you go on in there into the marriage chamber and seal the deal and then you will be married to him, and she did.

²² So Laban brought together all the people of the place and gave a feast. ²³ But when evening came, he took his daughter Leah and brought her to Jacob, and Jacob made love to her. ²⁴ And Laban gave his servant Zilpah to his daughter as her attendant.

²⁵ When morning came, there was Leah! So Jacob said to Laban, "What is this you have done to me? I served you for Rachel, didn't I? Why have you deceived me?"

Whenever you believe that a relationship is the answer, you are going to think that you've gone to bed with Rachel, but you're always going to wake up with Leah. If you think that a person can meet all of your needs, you are going to go into a relationship thinking that they

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are going to meet them all. But, when you wake up, you are always going to go, what just happened? Because no person can meet all of the needs you have.

What's interesting is that Leah was really doing the same thing. I am reading into this, but think about it. She's like, I'm older, he's stable; if I go in and give my body to this guy, maybe he'll love me. Or, maybe she was thinking, once he gets to know me, he will love me. So, she willingly deceives him and goes into the marriage chamber with a guy that did not really want her. Her story is so many people's stories, as you watch throughout this marriage as she tries thing after thing, hoping and thinking, if I do this, surely he will love me now. Watch as it plays out in verses 31-32, the saddest verses in this whole story:

³¹When the Lord saw that Leah was not loved, he enabled her to conceive, but Rachel remained childless. ³²Leah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Reuben, for she said, "It is because the Lord has seen my misery. Surely my husband will love me now."

But he didn't. What's been missing in this whole story? From the start up to now, what's missing? There's no evidence of prayer. There's no evidence of anyone seeking God. There is no evidence of faith. There is no evidence of any spiritual connection. As far as we can see, it's all based on what I want out of you. They were searching for the one. The problem is, they were searching for the wrong one.

We have been taught since birth by our culture that to be really fulfilled in life, we have to find the one. If I can just find Mr. Right or Mrs. Right; or if I can just force my significant other into the mold of who I think Mr. or Mrs. Right should be, then I will be happy and fulfilled. Because to really be fulfilled in life, you have to meet the one, but you can never ever forget, God is always your One. Everything else is 2. To really be fulfilled in life; oh, it's absolutely true, you have to meet the One. I want to focus for the next couple of minutes on the end of the story with Leah. She had three sons, each time thinking this will make Jacob love me. She goes on to have a fourth one, but something is different this time.

³⁵She conceived again, and when she gave birth to a son she said, "This time I will praise the Lord." So she named him Judah. Then she stopped having children.

Guess what's amazing about this son Judah. It was Leah, not Rachel, that was the mother of Judah, through whom centuries later, the Savior of the world, Jesus Christ, would one day be born. Proving once again in Scripture, that out of something that did not start right, God

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brought one of the most beautiful miracles in the history of the world. I want you to hear this. If your marriage or relationship did not start right, or is not right today, if there are two seeking One, anything is possible. So where do I start? Here's the best thing to do. Pray this: God, teach me to make You my One, and start there. When you put Him first in all things, there is no telling what good things God can bring out of something that doesn't look so beautiful today.

Now I know there are people here saying to themselves, "Pastor Justin, I'm doing all that and have been for some time. God is my one, but I'm still waiting!" All I can tell you is this: God's timing is perfect. All the time and every time. God's delays are not God's denials. Keep God your one, and in that relationship you will find true completeness and meaning no matter what happens. Let's all stand. As the band comes, please bow your heads and close your eyes.