

“Behold, It Was Leah!”

Genesis 29

The truth about marriage.

Timothy Keller said this about the Bible: “It is the most unsentimental of all books when it comes to the subject of marriage and family. It is utterly realistic about this: That it is always hard and often devastating to _____ be married, and it is always hard and sometimes devastating to _____ married.”

In the secular world that we live in today, outside of Christ, there’s a tremendous amount of fear and cynicism about marriage, for good reason. On the other hand, inside of Christ, there’s the tendency to think that a Christian marriage is a safe refuge and the answer to meeting our needs. But the Bible tells us **the truth about marriage**. It shows us marriage in its strengths and blessings, but also in its weaknesses and difficulties. Then the Bible points us to what we really _____ more than anything or anyone else: Jesus Christ. In our relationships, the Bible always directs us to Jesus.

In **Genesis 29**, in a dysfunctional family like Jacob’s, God and His Word does not candy-coat or make believe. If you know Jacob, you know that’s true. He is a member of God’s chosen family, *chosen* by mercy and grace, *but still* very human and very messed up (Cf. 25:19-27:46).

Under the direction of his parents, Jacob flees to his mother’s people, specifically to her brother Laban in Haran to find a wife for himself among his relatives rather than among the Canaanites (**1-14**). That’s the background that prepares us to look at a...

Marriage in the real world:

1. Laban’s _____ (15-29).

Verses 15-20: There’s a problem. In that culture, the older daughter was to be married off first. But Leah’s eyes were “weak,” and from the context we may conclude this describes how she looked. In contrast to her sister Rachel, who was “beautiful in form and appearance,” Leah was not _____. So, Laban has a problem. He’s has a daughter

that he thinks is not marriageable, and consequently will be a burden to him the rest of his life. So, what's a man like him to do?

Verses 21-28: Jacob doesn't even argue with Laban. When a con-man cons another con-man, he can only tip his hat. All is fair in love, in war, and in the con-game! So, Laban lays out his second offer, and Jacob agrees. But this stupid deal that seemed good to these stupid men is a raw deal for Leah, in which she's thrown into a living _____.

2. Leah's _____ (30-35).

The Lord mercifully makes Leah fruitful, and every time she has a son, she thinks God has blessed her with the necessary leverage to get what she desperately wants and _____, the love her husband.

Reuben means "See, a son" (32).

Simeon sounds like the Hebrew for "heard" (33).

Levi sounds like "attached" (34).

Every time she has a son, she wrongly thinks like the _____ thinks, "Finally, my husband will love me!" But it never works. Her prayers continue to go unanswered. He still doesn't love her!

But, in the last verse, something powerful happens. Leah is enlightened and dramatically changes her mind and heart (35). Judah means *praise*.

The lessons:

1. The bad news: In the morning, it's _____ Leah.

I love Leah. I feel like a father who wants to reach out and protect her. But, in this first lesson *she represents* for us the deep disappointment we all _____ in life in a sin-filled world. Deep disappointment that we can never fully avoid. And that's the genius of the narrative, the way it turns on Jacob. He's on his wedding night, thinking, "Finally, I'm going to have happiness in this life. Finally, after seven years, I have Rachel. *But, behold, in the morning, it was Leah!*"

This is a picture of the disillusionment experienced from the fall onward, when the first man and woman plunged us into the depths of sin. And, this is a fact that everyone in this place today needs to know: No matter

your hopes for a marriage, no matter your hopes for love, no matter your hopes for a ministry, *in the morning it will always be Leah.*

C. S. Lewis: “Most people, if they really learn to look into their hearts, they would know that they want acutely something that _____ be had in this world. There are all sorts of things in this world that offers to give it to you, but they never keep their promise. The spouse may be a good spouse. The scenery may be excellent. The job turns out to be a good one. But none of it can ever really satisfy.”

There’s a number of ways you can respond to this truth. You can blame your spouse and get a better one. You can blame the ministry and look elsewhere. You can blame the boss and move along. *Or, you can blame the reality of the world you live in, recognizing that there’s nothing in this world that will ever fully satisfy you—understanding, finally, that you were made for something beyond this world.* That last one will make you a Christ-_____! Here’s reality: All of life is marked by deep disappointment. Only One outside of this world truly satisfies.

2. The good news: Leah finally _____ to God.

It finally occurred to her, that when we place our hope in something _____ than God to give us a sense of love, of belonging, of value, of real meaning in life, we are committing idolatry. Leah finally got it. As long as she built her life on a white picket fence, thinking that’s what would make her happy, she lived a life of idolatry and she couldn’t be happy. Fortunately for Leah, she didn’t have a good marriage by having a good husband. If she had, then she probably would have been able to live in delusion for a much longer time, perhaps even a lifetime.

And, finally, at the very end, something radically changed. What happened? Because of her suffering, she stopped turning to her husband, she stopped obsessing over him, and instead she turned to the Lord. She finally got what she needed from the only One who could give it to her. She stopped her idolatry and worshiped God.

Who is this child?

Notice who this child is whose name sounds like *Praise*. It’s Judah. And Leah’s son Judah is the _____ through whom Messiah Jesus will

come. God comes to Leah and says, “You will be the mother of Jesus Christ, because your son is the seed.” Why? Because she turned to God, she grabbed hold of Him, and look how He blessed her. Look how He ripped her away from those who were ruining her life only to give her life indeed. How could this be? **The answer is in verse 31:** “When the Lord saw that Leah was hated,” He came to her.

The OT tells shows us what the NT proves to us, that God loves those who others don’t love. That God is attracted to the weak. That God is gracious to those who have sinned badly through idolatry and who have been thoroughly trashed by someone else’s sins. By His very gracious nature, He wants the ones that no one else wants. Though we may look like Leah, to Jesus Christ we look like Rachel. You are gorgeous to Him! And, that my brothers and sisters, is very good news!