

The First Family

Date: 5.17.2026 | Jacob's Family
Scripture: Genesis 29-30:24

CENTRAL TRUTHS



PRESCHOOL:

God cares for people and keeps His promises.

YOUNGER KIDS (K5-2ND GRADE):

Even when things were hard and unfair, God took care of Leah and helped grow Jacob's family.

OLDER KIDS (3RD-5TH GRADE):

God saw Leah's pain and blessed her with children, showing that He is at work even when people act selfishly or unfairly.

STUDENTS:

Amid deception, favoritism, and rivalry, God remained faithful to His promises by building Jacob's family, demonstrating that His purposes are not stopped by human sin.

ADULTS:

In the account of Jacob's marriages and the birth of his children, God sovereignly advances His covenant promises through deeply broken circumstances—marked by deception, favoritism, and rivalry—revealing His compassion for the overlooked and His faithfulness to accomplish His redemptive purposes despite human sin.

MEMORY VERSE

So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.
Galatians 3:9



DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

When Rachel and Leah name their children, the names reflect their struggle for Jacob's affection and their recognition of God's assistance in their unloved or childless state. God graciously gives Leah, the unloved wife, half of Jacob's sons, including the priestly line of Levi and the messianic line of Judah. - Reformation Study Bible note

BACKGROUND INFO FOR LEADERS

As we continue in **Genesis 29–30:24**, we see Jacob's life unfold after God's promise to him at Bethel. God had assured Jacob of His presence and promised to fulfill the covenant made to Abraham and Isaac through him. Now Jacob enters a new season in Paddan-aram, where God continues to work out His plan—not through ease, but through hardship, conflict, and growth.



In **Genesis 29:9**, we are introduced to Rachel, the younger and more beautiful daughter of Laban, whose name means “ewe,” fitting for a shepherdess. Jacob meets her as she tends her father's sheep and identifies himself as a close relative (**Genesis 29:12**). Laban warmly welcomes him, and the two enter into a work-for-hire relationship rather than a shared family partnership. When Laban asks what Jacob's wages should be, Jacob offers to work seven years for Rachel as his wife (**Genesis 29:18**). This service acts as a bride price, a common practice in the ancient Near East, and the time “seemed to him but a few days because of the love he had for her” (**Genesis 29:20**).

However, the story takes an ironic turn. After Jacob, the deceiver, completes seven years of labor, Laban deceives him by giving him Leah, the older sister with weak eyes, instead of Rachel (**Genesis 29:23–25**). Just as Jacob once disguised himself as the firstborn, he is now tricked into receiving the firstborn daughter. Laban then allows Jacob to marry Rachel as well, but only after agreeing to work another seven years (**Genesis 29:27–30**). Jacob loves Rachel more than Leah, setting the stage for deep tension and rivalry within the family.

This arrangement goes against God’s design for marriage in *Genesis 2:24*, where one man and one woman become one flesh. As seen throughout Scripture (*1 Samuel 1:2-7*), polygamous marriages often lead to pain and division, and Jacob’s household is no exception. Laban’s deception and manipulation contribute to years of conflict between his daughters and within Jacob’s family.

In *Genesis 29:31*, we are told that “the Lord saw that Leah was hated, and he opened her womb, but Rachel was barren.” God shows compassion to Leah, who is overlooked and unloved, and blesses her with children. Leah’s first three sons are named out of her sorrow and longing to be loved (*Genesis 29:32-34*), but with her fourth son, Judah, her perspective begins to shift—“this time I will praise the Lord” (*Genesis 29:35*). From Judah’s line would come kings and ultimately Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world.

In *Genesis 30*, the tension continues to grow. Rachel’s barrenness brings deep distress and jealousy, and she demands children from Jacob, who responds by acknowledging that God alone controls life (*Genesis 30:1-2*). In keeping with cultural practices of the time, Rachel gives her servant, Bilhah, to Jacob as a surrogate wife so she can have children through her (*Genesis 30:3-8*). When Leah stops having children for a time, she gives her servant Zilpah to Jacob as well (*Genesis 30:9-13*). These actions reflect a continued effort to control outcomes rather than trust God’s timing.

The rivalry intensifies further in the episode with mandrakes, a plant believed to help with fertility. Leah and Rachel bargain over Jacob’s time and the hope of having children (*Genesis 30:14-16*). Throughout all this striving, manipulation, and competition, it becomes clear that human effort cannot accomplish what only God can.

Finally, in *Genesis 30:22-24*, “God remembered Rachel, and God listened to her and opened her womb.” Rachel gives birth to Joseph and acknowledges that God has taken away her reproach. The repetition of “God” in this passage emphasizes that He alone is the giver of life. With the birth of Joseph, we see a shift from sorrow to praise, and the family continues to grow.

By the end of this section, Jacob has eleven sons and one daughter. The promise God made to Abraham—that his descendants would be many—is beginning to be fulfilled. What started as a promise to one man is now expanding into a family that will become a nation.

With Jacob as the final patriarch, the covenant promise is no longer focused on just one son but extends to all twelve of his sons.

This passage reminds us that God's plan moves forward even amid sin, dysfunction, and human weakness. Jacob is deceived just as he once deceived others. His family is marked by favoritism, jealousy, and striving. Yet God is not absent—He sees, He hears, and He acts.

These point us to the gospel. Like Jacob's family, our lives are often marked by sin, broken relationships, and attempts to control outcomes. But God's promises are not dependent on our perfection. Through the line of Judah, God sent Jesus, who came into a broken world to bring redemption. Jesus brings healing where there is division, hope where there is pain, and life where there is emptiness.

Genesis 29–30:24 shows us that even when life is messy, God is faithful. He sees the overlooked, hears the hurting, and keeps His promises. And through Jesus, He invites us to stop striving and instead trust Him, knowing that He is always working for His glory and our good.

TELL THE STORY

GENESIS 29-30:24

The Jesus Storybook Bible: The Girl No One Wanted

In the book of Genesis, God was continuing His promise to Abraham through Abraham's grandson, Jacob. After Jacob had to leave home because of his sin, he traveled to Paddan-aram to stay with his uncle Laban. While he was there, Jacob met Laban's daughter Rachel. She was kind and beautiful, and Jacob loved her very much. He wanted to marry her, so he agreed to work for Laban for seven years as a bride price. The Bible says those years felt like just a few days to Jacob because he loved Rachel so much (*Genesis 29:20*).

But on the wedding day, something surprising happened. Laban tricked Jacob and gave him Leah, Rachel's older sister, instead (*Genesis 29:23–25*). Jacob had once tricked his own father and brother, and now he himself was tricked. Jacob had been a deceiver in his own family, and now he was learning what it felt like to be on the other side of deception. Laban then agreed to let Jacob marry



Rachel too, but only if Jacob worked another seven years (*Genesis 29:27-30*). So Jacob ended up with two wives, which was not God's good design for marriage, and it led to many problems in his family.

Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah, and this made Leah very sad. But God saw Leah and cared about her. The Bible says God opened Leah's womb so she could have children, while Rachel was unable to have children for a time (*Genesis 29:31*). Leah had several sons, and at first she hoped Jacob would love her more, but later she began to praise God instead (*Genesis 29:32-35*). One of her sons was named Judah, and many years later, Jesus would be born from Judah's family line.

Meanwhile, Rachel became jealous because she could not have children. She and Leah began to compete with each other, even giving their servants to Jacob so they could have more children through them (*Genesis 30:1-13*). The family was full of jealousy, hurt feelings, and trying to control things instead of trusting God. They even argued over plants called mandrakes because they believed they could help them have children (*Genesis 30:14-16*). But all of this showed that only God has the power to give life.

Finally, after many years, God remembered Rachel and allowed her to have a son named Joseph (*Genesis 30:22-24*). By this time, Jacob had many children, and God's promise to Abraham of a large family was beginning to come true.

This story reminds us that even though people make wrong choices, God is still at work. Jacob had sinned and was still learning to trust God, but God did not give up on him. God was working on Jacob's heart and keeping His promises. In the same way, we all sin and make mistakes, but God loves us and continues His plan.

God's promise to Abraham was to bless the whole world, and He kept that promise by sending Jesus through this family. Jesus came to forgive our sins and bring us back to God. Because of Jesus, we don't have to live in jealousy, hurt, or trying to control everything—we can trust God, knowing He is always working and always keeps His promises.

REBUILD THE STORY



1. Where did Jacob go after leaving home, and why did he go there?
(Genesis 28:1–2; 29:1)
2. Who did Jacob meet when he arrived, and what was her role?
(Genesis 29:9–10)
3. What agreement did Jacob make with Laban to marry Rachel?
(Genesis 29:18)
4. How long did Jacob work for Rachel, and how did he feel about the time he spent there? *(Genesis 29:20)*
5. What did Laban do to Jacob on the wedding night?
(Genesis 29:23–25)
6. What did Jacob have to do to marry Rachel after being deceived?
(Genesis 29:27–30)
7. How did God show care for Leah when she was unloved?
(Genesis 29:31)
8. What important name did Leah give one of her sons, and why is it significant? *(Genesis 29:35)*
9. How did Rachel respond to not having children, and what actions did she take? *(Genesis 30:1–3)*
10. What did God eventually do for Rachel, and what does this show about Him? *(Genesis 30:22–24)*
11. Jacob was tricked after he had tricked others. What does this teach us about sin and its consequences?

12. How do you see people in this story trying to control their situation instead of trusting God? How do we sometimes do the same thing?
13. God saw Leah when she was unloved and hurting. What does this teach us about God's heart toward people who feel overlooked or rejected?
14. How does this story point to Jesus and God's bigger plan to bring salvation through Jacob's family?

GOSPEL EMPHASIS

Even though Jacob spiraled into sin and had to run away, God's promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob did not change. Jacob's deceit, Laban's trickery, and the brokenness in this family could not undo God's plan of redemption. While people were lying, competing, and trying to control their lives, God was still faithfully working behind the scenes to keep His promises. God did not leave Jacob—He was shaping him, providing for him, and moving His plan forward.



Surprisingly and beautifully, God chose to work through the unexpected. It was not the loved wife, Rachel, but Leah—the one who was overlooked and unloved—through whom the family line of Jesus would come (Genesis 29:35). This shows us that the gospel often turns things upside down. God does not choose people based on status, love, or human success, but by His grace. Just like Jacob and his family, we are all sinners, yet God still works through broken people to accomplish His perfect plan.

This points us to Jesus, the promised Savior who came through this very family. Jesus entered a broken world to rescue sinners and bring redemption. Because of Him, our sin does not have the final word—God's grace does. We can trust that even when our lives feel messy or out of control, God is still at work, keeping His promises and inviting us to rest in Him.

WHAT DOES THIS PASSAGE TEACH US ABOUT GOD?

Use your Attributes of God poster as a guide.

PRAYER PROMPTS

God, thank You that Your plans never fail, even when we make mistakes, and our lives feel messy. Help us to trust You instead of trying to control things on our own. Thank You that You see us, care for us, and use even broken situations for Your good purposes. Thank You for sending Jesus to rescue us and bring us into Your plan—help us to follow You and rest in Your grace.



THIS WEEK'S BIBLE READING

Genesis 31