

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

GENESIS 27-29

In bowling, a perfect game is a score of 300, and actually it's not that unusual. Often, a good bowler gets on a hot streak and rolls twelve consecutive strikes. *But a perfect series is another story.* In the history of bowling there've only been twenty-one perfect series of three straight perfect games, or 900 total pins.

And on January 18, 2010 it looked like it would happen again. Bill Fong had already bowled two perfect games, and was three rolls away from the trifecta. But Bill started sweating profusely. He got dizzy. Bill didn't know it, but he was having a stroke.

Bill fought through the discomfort. He picked up his ball, took his five steps approach, released it perfectly, *and strike.* He did it again - *another strike.* *The crowd watching him went wild.* Now Bill was one strike away from history. But this time when his ball curved exactly as it was suppose to, and hit exactly the right spot, the pins exploded, *all except the number ten pin.* It wobbled, then settled back on its base. Bill ended the night with a score of 899 - one pin short of perfection.

Bill was deeply disappointed, but later that night his physical condition worsened. He was rushed to the hospital where doctors discovered his stroke.

One doctor told him, that almost certainly, if Bill had knocked down that number ten pin, *already in the midst of a stroke, the excitement would've pushed his blood pressure higher.* Bill Fong probably would've died on Lane 28. *What Bill thought was the worse thing that could've happened to him, actually saved his life...*

And this is the Christian's predicament. God loves us, but **His will** is not always **our will**. God often works in our circumstances in ways we don't understand.

With their birth God promised Rebekah a twist with her twins. Despite what was customary, her younger son, Jacob, would gain preeminence over her older son, Esau. The little brother will receive the birthright.

This unexpected twist pleased Rebekah. Jacob was a mama's boy, her favorite. She liked that God chose Jacob over Esau. So much so, she tried to help God out. *If Rebekah had patiently trusted God, He would've fulfilled His will in a harmonious way.* But since Rebekah didn't understand God's plans she concocted her own plan, and turned her family into a war zone.

Genesis 27 is a study in God's providence. Nobody in the story does anything right, and everyone reaps the consequences of bad choices. Yet in the end God fulfills His purpose through the mistakes of His people.

The chapter begins, “Now it came to pass, when Isaac was old and his eyes were so dim that he could not see, that he called Esau his older son and said to him, “My son.” And he answered him, “Here I am.” Obviously, Isaac lived before the day of laser surgery, *even eyeglasses*. The old geezer was nearly blind.

“Then he said, “Behold now, I am old. I do not know the day of my death. Now therefore, please take your weapons, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field and hunt game for me. And make me savory food, such as I love, and bring it to me that I may eat, that my soul may bless you before I die.” Isaac thinks he’s on his deathbed. *Ironically, he lives another 43 years.*

According to Genesis 25:17, his brother, Ishmael died at the age of 137. Isaac is now close to that age, so he’s preparing to experience the same fate as his brother. And apparently, he has a taste for venison (*he enjoyed a good sirloin... he was a barbecue guy*), and for his last meal on earth he’d love a venison steak, so he sends Esau out, with his bow and arrow, for meat.

Verse 5, “Now Rebekah was listening when Isaac spoke to Esau his son.” She had eavesdropped. Rebekah recalled God’s promise when her sons were born: *the older would serve the younger*. She had always wondered how God would flip the birthright. Now she sees her husband fading fast, and thinks God is running out of time, so she devises her own plan.

And just to set the record straight, **God never runs out of time!** *We just don’t have God’s time table...*

“And Esau went to the field to hunt game and to bring it. So Rebekah spoke to Jacob her son, saying, “Indeed I heard your father speak to Esau your brother, saying, ‘Bring me game and make savory food for me, that I may eat it and bless you in the presence of the LORD before my death.’ “Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to what I command you. Go now to the flock and bring me from there two choice kids of the goats, and I will make savory food from them for your father, such as he loves. Then you shall take it to your father, that he may eat it, and that he may bless you before his death.” Rebekah is thinking, “**The way to a man’s heart is through his stomach.**” This is a calculated scheme. A wife is deceiving her husband.

On several occasions now I’ve been treated to goat meat. I’ve had both goat and venison, and they taste nothing alike. Evidently, Rebekah had concocted a recipe of spices that would make goat taste like deer.

Yet I don’t care how slick, and sophisticated, and clever our plans might be, we never accomplish God’s will through our own independent efforts, aka “*the works of the flesh.*” Hebrews 6:12 tells us it’s *by faith* and *through God’s Spirit* that we inherit His promises.

Verse 11, "And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, "Look, Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth-skinned man. Perhaps my father will feel me, and I shall seem to be a deceiver to him; and I shall bring a curse on myself and not a blessing." Notice, Jacob's concern isn't the morality of the plan. He's not asking *is this right?* All he cares about is what'll happen if he gets caught... "But his mother said to him, "Let your curse be on me, my son; only obey my voice, and go, get them for me." Rebekah throws caution to the wind. If there's consequences she'll take responsibility. She only cares about getting the best for her baby boy.

"And he went and got them and brought them to his mother, and his mother made savory food, such as his father loved. Then Rebekah took the choice clothes of her elder son Esau, which were with her in the house, and put them on Jacob her younger son. And she put the skins of the kids of the goats on his hands and on the smooth part of his neck. Then she gave the savory food and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob." Rebekah covers all her bases. She dresses Jacob in *Esau's clothes, mimics Esau's hairy skin, fixes Esau's food*, and Jacob complies. He could've refused to act in this ruse, but he doesn't.

Verse 18, "So he went to his father and said, "My father.' "And he said, "Here I am. Who are you, my son?" Jacob said to his father, "I am Esau your firstborn; I have done just as you told me; please arise, sit and eat of my game, that your soul may bless me."

But Isaac said to his son, "How is it that you have found it so quickly, my son?" And he said, "Because the LORD your God brought it to me." And this is scary. Jacob brings God into his lie. He says, "*God arranged for a quick kill.*" He's taking the Lord's name in vain.

Verse 21, "Then Isaac said to Jacob, "Please come near, that I may feel you, my son, whether you are really my son Esau or not." This is just what Jacob and Rebekah had anticipated. Isaac smells a rat. He's suspicious. "So Jacob went near to Isaac his father, and he felt him and said, "The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau." It seems Jacob tried to alter his voice to sound more like his brother. Esau was more masculine. His voice might've been deeper and raspier. Obviously, this part of the ruse doesn't work. Isaac identifies the voice as Jacob's, yet his furry skin still throws him off. Were told, "And he did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like his brother Esau's hands; so he blessed him."

Then he said, (Isaac has second thoughts) "Are you really my son Esau?" He said, "I am." He said, "Bring it near to me, and I will eat of my son's game, so that my soul may bless you." So he brought it near to him, and he ate; and he brought him wine, and he drank." I'm sure Jacob brought Isaac the whole bottle of wine. The plan was all

about clouding the old man's judgment.

Verse 26, "Then his father Isaac said to him, "Come near now and kiss me, my son." And he came near and kissed him; and he smelled the smell of his clothing, and blessed him and said: "Surely, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field which the LORD has blessed." Which is not flattering of Esau's hygiene...

Isaac is a strange study. He's suspicious he's being duped, but his desire for physical pleasure *and a little barbecue* drowns out any spiritual discernment God gives him. He listens to *his stomach* more than *God*.

"Therefore may God give you of the dew of heaven, of the fatness of the earth, and plenty of grain and wine. Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you. Be master over your brethren, and let your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you, and blessed be those who bless you!"

This was the same promise God made to Abraham in Genesis 12. It's now being passed to the third generation - from Abraham to Isaac (*not Ishmael*), and now from Isaac to Jacob (*not Esau*). **In reality this doesn't happen as the result of the fraud.** *God had already ordained the older would serve the younger.* But by doing it her way, Rebekah's deception will have a devastating effect on this family for years to come...

You start to see the pain in verse 30. "Now it happened, as soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, and Jacob had scarcely gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting. He also had made savory food, and brought it to his father, and said to his father, "Let my father arise and eat of his son's game, that your soul may bless me." And his father Isaac said to him, "Who are you?" So he said, "I am your son, your firstborn, Esau." Then Isaac trembled exceedingly, and said, "Who? Where is the one who hunted game and brought it to me? I ate all of it before you came, and I have blessed him - and indeed he shall be blessed."

It's amazing, Isaac didn't get angry that he'd been deceived, rather he "*trembled exceedingly.*" I think it dawned on him God's will had been done, *but not because of him, in spite of him!* He'd been spiritually insensitive to what God had wanted to do all along.

Isaac had been resistant to what he knew was God's will, and God's desire to break with custom now stuns Isaac. It shakes him up to see that God was able to go over-his-head, *so to speak*. Isaac realizes God, in His sovereignty, accomplished His plan without him. Hey, *God always gets His will done, with us or without us.*

Verse 34, "When Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with an exceedingly great and bitter cry, and said to his father, "Bless me - me also, O my father!"

But he said, "Your brother came with deceit and has taken away your blessing." And Esau said, "Is he not rightly named Jacob? For he has supplanted me these two times. He took away my birthright, and now look, he has taken away my blessing!" "*Jacob*" means "supplanter or double-crosser." Esau says, "*My brother has lived up to his name.*" Twice Jacob robs his brother. Once when he sold him a bowl of lentils for his birthright, and now he dupes dad to steal the blessing.

Verse 36, "And (Esau) said, "Have you not reserved a blessing for me? Then Isaac answered and said to Esau, "Indeed I have made him your master, and all his brethren I have given to him as servants; with grain and wine I have sustained him. What shall I do now for you, my son?" And Esau said to his father, "Have you only one blessing, my father? Bless me - me also, O my father!" And Esau lifted up his voice and wept." At first you feel sorrow and pity for Esau. But Hebrews 12:14-17 puts Esau's plight in context. It tells us...

"Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: looking diligently lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled; lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears." Esau cried and showed remorse, but no repentance. He regretted the outcome, but he was never willing to change and conform to God's will.

To the contrary, *Isaac learned from the experience*. He refused to reverse what he'd done. He could've revoked what had happened, but instead by faith he let it stand. And Hebrews 11:20 tells us why, "*By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau...*" Isaac knew that despite his own callousness God's providence had prevailed, and he accepted the situation as God's will.

But there was a secondary blessing for Esau - *a far-into-the-future prophecy*. Verse 39, "Then Isaac his father answered and said to him: "Behold, your dwelling shall be of the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above. By your sword you shall live, and you shall serve your brother; and it shall come to pass, when you become restless, that you shall break his yoke from your neck." After Israel's exodus from Egypt, they re-enter the land, and Esau's heirs, the Edomites, become subservient to the Israeli tribe of Judah. This lasts 600 years until 850 BC, and the reign of King Jehoram. 2 Chronicles 21:8 tells us, "*In his days Edom revolted against Judah's authority, and made a king over themselves.*" This is the fulfillment of Isaac's prophecy - *1000 years after it was uttered!*

Hebrews 12 tells us Esau never found repentance. A root of bitterness blocked his progress... **Bitterness is a blocker!** It cuts off the flow of God's blessing to us.

Once, our toilet got blocked and overflowed, soaking the basement with sewage. A root had grown into the septic line and blocked the flow. It was a miserable situation. But this is what happens to us spiritually.

God wants cleansing and blessing to flush through us, but bitterness blocks the spiritual flow. The sewage backs up - *anger, hatred, pride, jealousy* blocks God's blessing. This is why we need to uproot a root of bitterness. *Chose forgiveness. Don't harbor bitterness.*

Esau's resentment is obvious in verse 41, "So Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father blessed him, and Esau said in his heart, "The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then I will kill my brother Jacob." And the words of Esau her older son were told to Rebekah." And I'm sure it hit Rebekah, "*What kind of monster have I created? What have I done to my family?*" Her plan put her kids at odds... *Her older son now wants to kill her younger son.*

"So she sent and called Jacob her younger son, and said to him, "Surely your brother Esau comforts himself concerning you by intending to kill you. Now therefore, my son, obey my voice: arise, flee to my brother Laban in Haran. And stay with him a few days (these "*few days*" became 20 years), until your brother's fury turns away, until your brother's anger turns away from you, and he forgets what you have done to him; then I will send and bring you from there. Why should I be bereaved also of you both in one day?" Yet it never happens. Rebekah never sees her son, Jacob, again. Her failure to trust God, not only turned her older son against her, but it cost her the son she'd always loved.

Verse 46, "And Rebekah said to Isaac, "I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth; if Jacob takes a wife of the daughters of Heth, like these who are the daughters of the land, what good will my life be to me?" This was another reason for sending Jacob away, Mom doesn't want Jacob to marry an unbeliever as Esau did. She sends Jacob to her own homeland.

And this is a good lesson for parents. You can't pick your child's friends, but you can choose the pool of people they hang with... *by where you live... and go to school... and by the activities they participate in...*

Chapter 28, "Then Isaac called Jacob and blessed him, and charged him, and said to him: "You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan. Arise, go to Padan Aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother's father; and take yourself a wife from there of the daughters of Laban your mother's brother.

May God Almighty bless you, and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may

be an assembly of peoples; and give you the blessing of Abraham, to you and your descendants with you, that you may inherit the land in which you are a stranger, which God gave to Abraham." Jacob will pass the Abrahamic Covenant to his twelve sons, *the fathers of the 12 tribes of Israel*. God's covenant passed to the Jews, not the Arabs.

Verse 5, "So Isaac sent Jacob away, and he went to Padan Aram, to Laban the son of Bethuel the Syrian, the brother of Rebekah, the mother of Jacob and Esau.

Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him away to Padan Aram to take himself a wife from there, and that as he blessed him he gave him a charge, saying, "You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan," and that Jacob had obeyed his father and his mother and had gone to Padan Aram. Also Esau saw that the daughters of Canaan did not please his father Isaac. So Esau went to Ishmael and took Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham's son, the sister of Nebajoth, to be his wife in addition to the wives he had." Earlier in 26:34 Esau had taken Canaanite wives. Here though, he doesn't want Jacob to *one-up* him, so he mimics his parent's desire for Jacob, and marries a member of his extended family. All Esau cares about now is keeping up with Jacob. Bitterness and hatred for his brother is ruling his life.

Verse 10, "Now Jacob went out from Beersheba and went toward Haran. So he came to a certain place and stayed there all night, because the sun had set. And he took one of the stones of that place and put it at his head, and he lay down in that place to sleep." Jacob was exhausted from his ordeal with Esau. *He needs sleep. He doesn't even mind a stone as his pillow.*

"Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder was set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it." Once a young man told his longtime girlfriend, "I had a dream last night that I actually proposed to you. What do you think it means?" The frustrated girl said, "*It means you're smarter asleep than you are awake.*"

The same could be said of Jacob. He's a conniver and schemer awake, yet in his dream he sees a glorious vision of a ladder connecting heaven to earth.

And we have to wait 2000 years to learn the spiritual significance of this ladder. In John 1:51 our Lord Jesus speaks to His disciple, Nathanael, *and says of Himself, "I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."* **Jesus was Jacob's ladder.** He alone connects heaven to earth! Our Lord Jesus is the only way to reach God. Jacob sees a picture of Jesus.

Verse 13, "And behold, the LORD stood above it and said: "I am the LORD God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you

and your descendants. Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” Bethel was the center of the land God promised Abraham. Now God confirms Jacob’s ownership of the covenant and its territory.

Jacob was wrong in the deceptive way he obtained the blessing from his father, Isaac, but God affirms the outcome as His will. Jacob, and his descendants, the nation Israel, are the heirs to the Abrahamic Covenant.

“Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you.”

Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it." And he was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!" This is a turning point in Jacob’s life. Out from under his mom’s apron he encounters the true God for Himself. *Her God now becomes his God. And your life will turn when you personally meet God!*

Verse 18, “Then Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put at his head, set it up as a pillar, and poured oil on top of it. And he called the name of that place Bethel; but the name of that city had been Luz previously.” “Luz” means “separation.” “Bethel” means “house of God.” At Bethel, a separated Jacob now becomes a member of God’s household.

“Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I am going, and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on, so that I come back to my father's house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God." At this point, Jacob’s faith is weak. His vow is conditional. “*If God will be with me...*” This is a far cry from the faith of the three Hebrews in Babylon who refused to bow to King Nebuchadnezzar’s golden image. They said, “Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace... *But if not*, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods...” Jacob has a ways to go to build this kind of strong faith. Jacob was blessed by God, but God is about to break Him. *At least, this is a starting point.*

And Jacob prays, “And this stone which I have set as a pillar shall be God's house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You.” Notice, Jacob’s faith journey begins with a promise to give a tenth of his wealth to God. **Tithing** is his initial step of faith.

You can’t say your faith journey has begun unless you trust enough to offer God a portion of your income. **The sign of Jacob’s newfound faith was his giving.**

In Genesis 28 Jacob dreams, *but in Genesis 29 he meets the girl of his dreams.* “So Jacob went on his journey and came to the land of the people of the East. And he

looked, and saw a well in the field; and behold, there were three flocks of sheep lying by it; for out of that well they watered the flocks. A large stone was on the well's mouth. Now all the flocks would be gathered there; and they would roll the stone from the well's mouth, water the sheep, and put the stone back in its place on the well's mouth." This stone was heavy, so much so, it took a combined effort of the shepherds to move. This guarded the well from unauthorized users.

"And Jacob said to them, "My brethren, where are you from?" And they said, "We are from Haran." Then he said to them, "Do you know Laban the son of Nahor?" And they said, "We know him." *And did they ever!* Laban is a bigger conniver and deceiver than Jacob. Jake is about to meet his match. **In Bethel** he sees God's glory... **in Haran** he'll taste man's cruelty.

Verse 6, "So he said to them, "Is he well?" And they said, "He is well. And look, his daughter Rachel is coming with the sheep." Then he said, "Look, it is still high day; it is not time for the cattle to be gathered together. Water the sheep, and go and feed them." But they said, "We cannot until all the flocks are gathered together, and they have rolled the stone from the well's mouth; then we water the sheep." Now while he was still speaking with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep, for she was a shepherdess. And it came to pass, when Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother's brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother's brother, that Jacob went near and rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother." Nothing like a macho demonstration of a little muscle to try and impress a girl, **but it worked!** Verse 11 tells us, "Then Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice and wept."

And here, his tears are tears of joy. He has found the woman of his dreams. It's love at first sight. Jacob kisses Rachel. It's been said, "A boy becomes a man when he decides it's more fun to steal a kiss than second base." Well, Jacob is certainly growing up.

"And Jacob told Rachel that he was her father's relative and that he was Rebekah's son. So she ran and told her father. Then it came to pass, when Laban heard the report about Jacob his sister's son, that he ran to meet him, and embraced him and kissed him, and brought him to his house. So he told Laban all these things. And Laban said to him, "Surely you are my bone and my flesh." Jacob was Uncle Laban's nephew. "And he stayed with him for a month."

Then Laban said to Jacob, "Because you are my relative, should you therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what should your wages be?" Now Laban had two daughters: the name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. Leah's eyes were delicate, but Rachel was beautiful of form and appearance." The phrase,

“Leah’s eyes were delicate” can mean one of two things. Either she had weak, ugly eyes - or, she was so ugly she made your eyes hurt. Either way Leah was not an attractive young lady.

On the other hand Rachel was a beauty. Both her “*form and appearance*” - her face and figure - were attractive. She was a shepherdess with the looks of a cover girl. You might call her *a fox in sheep’s clothing!*

Verse 18, “Now Jacob loved Rachel; so he said, “I will serve you seven years for Rachel your younger daughter.” And Laban said, “It is better that I give her to you than that I should give her to another man. Stay with me.” So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed only a few days to him because of the love he had for her.” I hope you notice, love is always willing to wait! Love never forces the issue. It’s willing to bide its time. It’s been said, “Lust can never wait to get. Whereas, love will always wait to give.”

Verse 21, “Then Jacob said to Laban, “Give me my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in to her.” And Laban gathered together all the men of the place and made a feast.” The wedding feast lasted a week. So for seven days Jacob partied hearty. By the time the wedding night rolled around he was sauced.

“Now it came to pass in the evening, that (Laban) took Leah his daughter and brought her to Jacob; and he went in to her. And Laban gave his maid Zilpah to his daughter Leah as a maid.” Now fast-forward about eight hours... “So it came to pass in the morning, that behold, it was Leah.” And once again, Jacob kisses a girl and starts to weep, but for a different reason. He’s kissed the wrong woman. He went to bed expecting to hug Rachel, but instead his arms were around Leah.

And every married person in this room has encountered the same experience. *At some point after the wedding night we wake up realizing the person we married is not the person we thought they were.*

Every married person is in a figurative sense married to two people - Leah and Rachel. In many ways your spouse is like a beautiful Rachel or handsome Ray, but in other ways he or she is like an ugly Leah or Lee.

Rachel is the part of your spouse you love, you’re attracted to, you absolutely adore! You could be forced to wait on this Rachel for seven long years, and your love for her would cause it to seem like but a few days!

But you’re also married to a Leah! (spinning) This is the side of your spouse that was a surprise! When you married, you knew you were getting Rachel, but you didn’t know about Leah. Ladies, Lee is the ornery, ugly, selfish side of your man. Husbands, Leah is the side of your wife that was covered-up, and veiled, and hidden before the vows were taken. She was the surprise!

And I don't care how long you date before you marry, whether its seven months, seven years, or seventeen years - you'll never learn all there is to know about your spouse. There are definite surprises after the wedding.

Every married person is married to a Leah or a Lee. There are aspects of your spouse that are ugly, and the blemishes were there from the beginning, but you were drunk on love and you didn't see them. Your spouse is not what you thought, and it's a shock!

This is why "(Jacob) said to Laban, "What is this you have done to me? Was it not for Rachel that I served you? Why then have you deceived me?" And Laban said, "It must not be done so in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn." And how those words must've stung! This is why Esau was so angry with Jacob. Now the deceiver is the one who gets deceived. It's certainly true, "what goes around comes around."

Laban continues in verse 27, "Fulfill her week, and we will give you this one also for the service which you will serve with me still another seven years." Jacob can marry Rachel now, but in return he has to serve Laban an additional seven years. Verse 28, "Then Jacob did so and fulfilled her week. So he gave him his daughter Rachel as wife also. And Laban gave his maid Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as a maid. Then Jacob also went in to Rachel, and he also loved Rachel more than Leah. And he served with Laban still another seven years." Jacob ends up serving 14 years for Rachel.

This story reminds me of the Italian fellow getting married in a seaside wedding. But a heavy fog rolled in. He couldn't see, and actually married two women. When asked to explain, he said, "It was a big-ga-mist."

Hey, nowhere in Scripture is bigamy advocated by God. The divine blueprint for marriage is for one man and one woman committed for a lifelong relationship.

I believe Jacob should've never married Rachel. He should've left with Leah and learned to be content. But you say, "*Come on Sandy, the girl was ugly as mud, and Jacob didn't even love her. How can you say he should've left with Leah?*" Hey, I honestly believe, even if Jacob didn't love her - if the two of them had conducted their marriage God's way, Jacob would've eventually loved Leah just as much as he ever loved Rachel. *Love grows when marriage is done God's way.*

It sounds funny saying it, but *the feeling of "love"* is a far over-rated ingredient when it comes to success in marriage. It's important in courtship, but in marriage it's way overblown. I've seen marriages where love was depleted, but the couple decided to stick it out, and do things God's way - and love started to grow again!

On the other hand, I've seen marriages abounding in love, yet husband and wife

ignored God's guidance, and love dwindled as the marriage broke apart.

Hey, give me two people who can't stand each other and encourage that couple to interact God's way - *to give, and serve, and sacrifice for one another* - and love will grow out of nowhere! I've seen it happen! **With the right commitment no problem is unsolvable. Without that commitment every problem is a threat.**

As we're told in verse 30, at the outset, Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah, but there's strong evidence that slowly over time Jacob's initial feelings changed...

"When the LORD saw that Leah was unloved, He opened her womb; but Rachel was barren. So Leah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Reuben; for she said, "The LORD has surely looked on my affliction. Now therefore, my husband will love me." At first, your heart breaks for Leah! She's always longing for her husband's love, but notice what's next...

Verse 33, **"Then she conceived again and bore a son, and said, "Because the LORD has heard that I am unloved, He has therefore given me this son also." And she called his name Simeon."** **"Reuben"** means **"see."** **"Simeon"** means **"heard."** God saw her barrenness, and *heard* she was unloved, and made her fruitful.

"She conceived again and bore a son, and said, "Now this time my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons." Therefore his name was called Levi." **"Levi"** means **"attached."**

Obviously, Leah kept working at her marriage. All that's mentioned here of her efforts are her three labors, but I'm sure she kept laboring in many other ways to improve her situation and benefit her marriage.

Finally verse 35, **"And she conceived again and bore a son, and said, "Now I will praise the LORD." Therefore she called his name Judah. Then she stopped bearing."** **"Judah"** means **"praise."** The implication is with the birth of Judah she experiences the enjoyment of marital love, and no longer feels the need to bear a child. She finally can praise the LORD!

It's interesting, when you jump ahead to the end of Jacob's life you find him making an interesting choice. In Genesis 49 he's on his death bed, and with his last breath he makes a final request. He says, **"bury me in the cave (where they) buried Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, and (where) I buried Leah."**

You'd think Jacob would want his final resting place to be next to Rachel in Bethlehem. But, no, he asks to be buried in Mamre - *alongside Leah*. On the first night of their marriage he resented lying next to Leah, but at the end of their road together it was his utmost desire. Jacob wanted to make sure until the resurrection his bones would lay next to Leah's. *His heart had turned!*

It's ironic, but Rachel died prior to Leah, thus Leah was the wife who ended up with Jacob all to herself. It was Jacob and Leah who enjoyed growing old together... And it was through Leah, not Rachel, that *Judah* was born. The Messiah came through the tribe of Judah, and thus, Jesus was of the lineage of Leah, not Rachel. Perhaps this was God's way of putting his stamp of approval on the union between Jacob and Leah. The royal line came through their marriage.

In the beginning we're told, "**(Jacob) loved Rachel more than Leah**" - but in the end the roles were reversed. That's why I say, Jacob should've made a life with Leah. Instead, he lived *in a bigamist relationship*, and tried to satisfy two warring women. We'll discover next week that Jacob's house was not a happy home!