

## REFLECTION GUIDE

### GENESIS 29:1-30 | CAN'T BUY ME LOVE

#### KEY TERMS

**Laban** - Laban is Rebekah's (Isaac's wife and Jacob's mother) brother. He first enters the story in Genesis 24 when Abraham sends his servant to find Isaac a wife. Now, Isaac has sent his son Jacob to find a wife and Isaac again comes to Laban. In their culture, it was not unusual to marry within one's extended family.

**Shepherdess** - The role of shepherd/shepherdess was vital in the Ancient Near East. Shepherding was primarily done by men and Rachel is the only explicit reference to a shepherdess in the OT (it's possible that Zipporah was also a shepherdess; see Exodus 2:16).

#### DID YOU KNOW?

OT weddings were a weeklong celebration. The couple would officially be married at the beginning of the week and then spend 7 days together including feasts with family. Many Jews today still follow this custom.

#### BACKGROUND

Jacob continues his journey to Paddan-Aram/Haran and finally arrives at a field with flocks of sheep and a well (vv. 1-3). Jacob begins a conversation with the shepherds in the field and asks if they know Laban to which they answer that they do (vv. 4-5). At the same time, Rachel, Laban's daughter, comes out to the field with sheep and Jacob moves the stone covering the well for her (v. 10). Why the shepherds did not move the stone is unclear. It's possible they were not strong enough or they were simply being lazy. Either way, Jacob's actions in moving the stone for Rachel are meant to be seen as chivalrous. In his excitement, Jacob *kissed Rachel and wept aloud* (v. 11). It was common to kiss family members as a greeting and this kiss should not be seen as romantic or inappropriate. Jacob then goes to Laban and greets him excitedly as well (vv. 13-14). After staying with Laban for a month and presumably helping with his livestock, Laban asks Jacob what he can pay him and Jacob asks to marry Rachel in exchange for working for Laban for seven years (vv. 15-18). The reason Jacob offers to work is because he did not have the means to offer the customary betrothal gift. After working for Laban for seven years, it finally comes time for Jacob to marry Rachel but on the wedding night Laban sends Leah, Rachel's sister, in to be with Jacob instead (vv. 20-24). Jacob does not realize what has happened until morning and becomes angry because he is now married to Leah instead of Rachel (v. 25). Jacob—who tricked his father back in chapter 27—has been tricked by Laban. Laban's excuse is that it is not customary for a younger daughter to be married before an older daughter, but he offers Jacob a chance to marry Rachel as well if he will work for seven more years, which Jacob does (vv. 26-30). Although this story takes place before the Law is given, the OT law prohibits marrying sisters while both are alive (Lev 18:18).

#### GOING DEEPER

Even though Jacob tries to do the right thing, it isn't a promise that things will go well for him. Read John 16:33, James 1:2-4, and Romans 8:19-25. What do these verses teach about the reality of hard times in life? What do they show us about how followers of Jesus should respond to difficulty in life? How do they give you hope?

## **REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

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#### **LEARNING THE WORD**

1. Read Genesis 29:1-14. How was Jacob *received* by Laban and his family?
2. When you consider Jacob's journey so far and all that happened in Genesis 28, how do you think Jacob was feeling about his life upon arriving at Laban's house? What details in verses 1-14 reveal his outlook and emotional state?
3. Read Genesis 29:15-30. How was Jacob *deceived* by Laban and his family?
4. How does Laban's deception of Jacob mirror Jacob's deceptions of Isaac and Esau?
5. In Jacob's struggle with Laban, how is God's relentless grace preparing Jacob for a goodness that is far greater than momentary happiness?

#### **LIVING THE WORD**

6. Has God ever used your life circumstances to refocus your life, call you to repentance, or refine your character?
7. Read Hebrews 12:5-6, 10-11. How do you discern the discipline of your Heavenly Father in your life? Why is discipline a gift of grace in your life?
8. Discuss the following statement: "Grace + Truth + Time = Life Change." Why are all three elements necessary for our transformation? Which is easiest for you to accept? Which is most difficult for you?
9. As you seek to walk with God this week, consider repeating this prayer daily, "Heavenly Father, help me to trust your grace and your truth to transform my life in your time."