

“In Sickness”: Jacob and Rachel’s Childless Love

GENESIS 29:1–30:8

Every marriage is a blind date. One hardly knows a person on the wedding day, even after a long friendship, and one never knows whether one’s spouse will be well or sick in the long run. So vows prepare us for reality. But they also invite us to view sickness, whether temporary or prolonged, as an opportunity to find God together—precisely when we find ourselves at the limits of our own resources.

As we explore sickness in this study and health in the next, we will consider Jacob and his relationship with his two wives, Rachel and Leah. While Rachel was the loved wife in this difficult triangle, her continuing childlessness put a great strain on her marriage and was like a prolonged illness. But it also called forth faith.

1. Recall, if you can, a time when illness turned out to be a blessing to your marriage relationship.

READ GENESIS 29:1-20.

2. What indications are there in the text that Jacob was not merely a homesick runaway infatuated with the first eligible girl he met, but was a man who truly loved a woman?

Why would Jacob's bride price have been a more precious gift to the marriage than the goats and cattle he was unable to give to the bride's father, Laban?

READ GENESIS 29:21-31.

3. How did Laban's cruel scheme put both daughters in an impossible situation?
4. It has been said that God's gracious humor is expressed as he brings people and situations into our lives that reveal us for who we are, so that we might in the end know who God is. In what way could this wedding fiasco have been a crucial growing experience for Jacob?

READ GENESIS 30:1-8.

5. In what ways did Rachel show an inappropriate response to her physical condition in her relationship with her sister, her husband, herself, and her God?
6. In what way was Jacob's response inappropriate?
7. What might this couple have done if they truly did not want to usurp God's place in their life together (verse 2)?
8. How do you respond as a couple when you are confronted with a situation you cannot control?

9. What have you learned about the discipline of being faithful to each other, even in sickness?