

STUDY 9

“And in Health”: Jacob and Leah’s Loveless Abundance

GENESIS 29:30-35; 30:9-24,43;

31:3; 32:22-32

The marriage of Jacob and Leah has been described as love at second sight, or “an accident that grew into a blessing.”* Jacob worked seven years for beautiful Rachel, but on the wedding night, probably after plying Jacob with wine, Laban gave Jacob his older daughter, Leah, the one with “the weak eyes.” He got Rachel, too, in a week’s time, but only after promising to work for Laban another seven years. Leah was doomed to be Jacob’s second choice. She was fertile, healthy, and faithful but was married to a man by mistake. Just as Rachel was called to faith in God through her barrenness, so Leah was invited to hear the whispering of God in her large family and the shout of God in her experience of being unloved.

* Brian L. Harbour, *Famous Couples of the Bible* (Nashville: Broadman, 1979), p. 41.

1. Often, people who are blessed with physical health and prosperous circumstances in marriage say, "I married the wrong person." Why do you think people say this when things appear to be going so well?

2. Review the story of Jacob's marriage to the two sisters. What made Leah's situation seemingly hopeless in her relationship with her father, her husband, and her sister? (If necessary, reread Genesis 29:21-30.)

READ GENESIS 29:30-35; 30:43; 31:3; 32:22-32.

3. What indications do we have that God was determined to bless Leah and Jacob in spite of the faulty way they entered the marriage?

What encouragement does this give to those who are convinced they made a mistake in getting married or got married in an inappropriate way?

4. Note how the name of each of Leah's children is a spoken prayer to God about her marriage. What was apparently more important to Leah than the blessing of having many healthy children?
5. How would you describe Leah's relationship with God at this point? Judah's name means "to praise God" (29:35). What seems to have been happening in Leah's relationship with God?

READ GENESIS 30:9-24.

6. Verse 17 says that "God listened to Leah." Why is this especially surprising, given the circumstances and the initiative Leah took?

What does this tell us about our God?

7. As the story unfolds, we learn that Rachel was naturally infertile, while Leah was naturally fertile. Why was it just as important for Leah to pray to God about her family situation as it was for Rachel?
8. Why might it be just as important to pray when a couple is “in health” and “in riches” as when things look bleak?
9. What do you think is the main thing you have learned from Leah’s long and healthy life with Jacob?