

The Sons of Jacob

Genesis 29:31-30:24; 35:16-26

MEMORY VERSE

PSALM 127:3, 5

Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

Four pie pans, half as many Ping-Pong balls as you have children, markers of various colors, and a body of Christ basket (use your imagination).

A glass bottle or glass for each child (not to keep), food coloring, an eye dropper or spoon or ladle, 4 bowls, water a metal spoon or fork for each child, a large table, and a plastic or paper table cloth.

Plastic drinking straws, heavy paper (index card thickness), paper clips, brown paper bags, and string.

ATTENTION GRABBER!

Pie Pan Ping Pong Relay

You need 4 pie pans, half as many Ping-Pong balls as you have children, markers of color, and a body of Christ basket (use your imagination).

Draw various colors of smiley faces on the Ping-Pong balls. Divide the class into two teams for a relay. Make two lines at one end of the classroom. Put the “body of Christ basket” at the other end. Two team members at a time must volley the little ping pong men back and forth between them until they get to the body of Christ. If they drop the man, they may pick him up, but only with the pie pans (work together!), no hands allowed.

Explain that all kinds of different people can be in the body of Christ. **All believers are God's children, even though we may be different.**

LESSON TIME!

Today we are going to learn all about Jacob's sons. We're also going to learn that our attempts to solve our problems on our own usually just complicate matters further, but God works it for His good. And most importantly, we will learn that whoever comes to Jesus and has accepted Him into their life, becomes a child of God. **All believers are God's children, even though we may be different.**

GENESIS 29:31-35

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."

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.

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.

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.

Here we have the beginning of a struggle within Jacob's family. If you remember, Jacob wanted to marry Rachel, but Laban tricked Jacob into marrying Leah. Just think of how Leah felt when Jacob was finally wed to Rachel and ignored her. Well, the Lord saw how Jacob was treating Leah, and had compassion on her and opened her womb, allowing her to have children. Rachel wasn't allowed to have children at this time.

In that day and age, having children was a sign God's blessing. So it was very important to both Leah and Rachel to have children. Leah had hoped that since she had children that this would cause Jacob to love her more.

God always sees when people suffer or go through hard times and in His perfect time He will help us. God knew about Leah's suffering and at the right time helped her. We must always remember that God is watching us like a father watches over His children. When your Dad sees someone or something hurting you, he is not just going to stand by and let it happen. How much more our heavenly Father will help us when we need Him.

Now, He may not help right when we want Him to or the way we want Him to, but that's because He knows what is best for us. Just look at Leah and the children that God gave to her. Through Levi would come the line of priests that eventually would minister to the Lord in the tabernacle and the temple. Then we also see Judah, through whom the line Jesus would come. God loves and helps those who are suffering and not treated fairly.

Sometimes people may ask, "why does God allow so much pain and suffering in this world." Well we have pain and suffering because of man's rebellion and sin. But God does take notice and He helps those who are suffering. Throughout the Bible He commands His people to help those who are suffering or are less fortunate, especially the widows and orphans. We need to have the heart of the Lord and help those around us who have less than us.

The first son God gave to Leah, she named Reuben, which means, "The Lord has surely looked on my affliction." It also indicates something else to us regarding Leah for she also said, "Now therefore, my husband will love me." This name showed her hope and faith in the Lord. It seems to indicate that Leah had prayed to the Lord about her suffering. She loved and worshiped the Lord.

The next son born to Leah was named Simeon, which means "God heard." She then gave birth to another son, and his name was Levi, again naming him because she hoped her husband would become attached to her. Her fourth son was named Judah, which means "let Him be praised." Leah was very thankful for her children. During this entire time, Rachel remained barren.

GENESIS 30:1-24

Now when Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister, and said to Jacob, "Give me children, or else I die!"

And Jacob's anger was aroused against Rachel, and he said, "Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?"

So she said, "Here is my maid Bilhah; go in to her, and she will bear a child on my knees, that I also may have children by her."

Then she gave him Bilhah her maid as wife, and Jacob went in to her. And Bilhah conceived and bore Jacob a son.

Then Rachel said, "God has judged my case; and He has also heard my voice and given me a son." Therefore she called his name Dan.

And Rachel's maid Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son.

Then Rachel said, "With great wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister, and indeed I have prevailed." So she called his name Naphtali.

When Leah saw that she had stopped bearing, she took Zilpah her maid and gave her to Jacob as wife.

And Leah's maid Zilpah bore Jacob a son.

Then Leah said, "A troop comes!" So she called his name Gad.

And Leah's maid Zilpah bore Jacob a second son.

Then Leah said, "I am happy, for the daughters will call me blessed." So she called his name Asher.

Now Reuben went in the days of wheat harvest and found mandrakes in the field, and brought them to his mother Leah. Then Rachel said to Leah, "Please give me some of your son's mandrakes."

But she said to her, "Is it a small matter that you have taken away my husband? Would you take away my son's mandrakes also?" And Rachel said, "Therefore he will lie with you tonight for your son's mandrakes."

When Jacob came out of the field in the evening, Leah went out to meet him and said, "You must come in to me, for I have surely hired you with my son's mandrakes." And he lay with her that night.

And God listened to Leah, and she conceived and bore Jacob a fifth son.

Leah said, "God has given me my wages, because I have given my maid to my husband." So she called his name Issachar.

Then Leah conceived again and bore Jacob a sixth son. And Leah said, "God has endowed me with a good endowment; now my husband will dwell with me, because I have borne him six sons." So she called his name Zebulun.

Afterward she bore a daughter, and called her name Dinah.

Then God remembered Rachel, and God listened to her and opened her womb.

And she conceived and bore a son, and said, "God has taken away my reproach."

So she called his name Joseph, and said, "The LORD shall add to me another son."

Here we see Rachel who is very jealous of her sister. First she went to Jacob and said, "give me children or else I die," and Jacob got angry and upset and asked whether she thought he was God who can open her womb. Jacob knew that there wasn't anything he could do about it. So Rachel did the same thing that Sarah did many years earlier with Abraham. But what she must have forgotten is how much of a problem it caused for Abraham and Sarah. Rachel gave her maid to Jacob to have children for her.

Rachel may not have had the same faith that Leah had. Rather she decided to take matters into her own hands. Her choice to give her

servant to Jacob only caused more jealousy and more problems for the whole family.

How important it is for us to remember to trust God in those impossible situations! Even in those situations where it looks as if you know what to do and you feel like you don't need to acknowledge God, always pray no matter what. (Proverbs 3:5-6). When we seek the Lord and ask for His wisdom and then obey we will always stay out of trouble.

We then have Rachel's maid give birth to two sons and Rachel names the first Dan, which means "God has vindicated me." She believed that God had now corrected her wrong, her bareness. The name of the second was Naphtali, which means, "I fought" and reflects the struggle with her sister.

Leah then responded by giving her maid to Jacob. It is like she had to keep up with what Rachel was doing. But where was Jacob in all of this? The Bible doesn't say a lot about his opinion in all of this, but perhaps he should have stepped in and settled this conflict for there to be peace in his family.

Leah's maid gave birth to two sons named, Gad, "troop," and Asher, "happy". Leah saw that with God's help, she was prospering. The continuing saga moves on. Now we have Reuben, who found some mandrakes, which are a type of flowering plant which people thought helped them to have children. A desperate Rachel makes a deal with Leah to get the mandrakes, because she thinks it will help her have a child of her own.

Rachel was still not trusting God. So Leah then has another son named, Issachar, "My hire" because of the deal made with the mandrakes. The name of Leah's sixth son was Zebulun, "gift" and "honor" which meant, God gave her Zebulun as a gift and her husband would treat her with honor. Leah had one more child that the Bible records and it was a daughter who she named Dinah.

"And God remembered Rachel". God was still full of grace and favor toward Rachel. But only after He taught her lessons of dependence and patience. She finally had a child, a son whom she named Joseph. Rachel is thankful to God for taking away her barrenness, but there is also hope in the name that she picked. The name means, "God has taken away my disgrace". Then Rachel prayed that He would "add another son."

Finally Rachel was happy, looking in faith for a second child. Jacob now had many children and several of them had different mothers. These children were very different from one another and we will learn in upcoming lessons that they didn't always get along. But we can learn from them that even though we may be very different from one another, if we know Jesus then we are God's children and God has a special plan for our lives.

God knows us and the plans He has for our lives. No one is better than any one else. We are all the same. God is the one who is in control of our lives. He is our Creator and made us each individually with a perfect plan all mapped out for us. God's Word has everything we need. Remember it's God's letter to us; it's like a father talking to his child. We can have a blessed and happy life because we are His children. **All believers are God's children, even though we are different.**

GENESIS 35:16-26

Then they journeyed from Bethel. And when there was but a little distance to go to Ephrath, Rachel labored in childbirth, and she had hard labor.

Now it came to pass, when she was in hard labor, that the midwife said to her, "Do not fear; you will have this son also."

And so it was, as her soul was departing (for she died), that she called his name Ben-Oni; but his father called him Benjamin.

So Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem).

And Jacob set a pillar on her grave, which is the pillar of Rachel's grave to this day.

Then Israel journeyed and pitched his tent beyond the tower of Eder.

And it happened, when Israel dwelt in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine; and Israel heard about it. Now the sons of Jacob were twelve:

the sons of Leah were Reuben, Jacob's firstborn, and Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun;

the sons of Rachel were Joseph and Benjamin;

the sons of Bilhah, Rachel's maidservant, were Dan and Naphtali; and

the sons of Zilpah, Leah's maidservant, were Gad and Asher. These were

the sons of Jacob who were born to him in Padan Aram.

Once in the land, the family was complete with the birth of Benjamin. But with Benjamin's birth came Rachel's death, for she died giving birth to him. Rachel's encouragement came in that the child was born, and it was a son. Rachel's desire and hope expressed at the birth of Joseph were therefore fulfilled. Rachel named her son; Ben-oni, "son of my pain," but Jacob renamed him Benjamin, "son of my right hand."

Then Jacob buried Rachel and erected a pillar over her grave. We then see where Reuben commits a terrible sin that would cause more problems for the family and for him.

Next we see the names of all of Jacob's sons. These men would become the heads of the twelve original tribes of Israel. This was another assurance that the promises of God are good. God would make a great nation from the descendents of these 12 men. We are the body of Christ, and He is the head. We are all members one with another, brothers and sisters in Christ. And we must work together like family. **All believers are God's children, even though we may be different.**

We may come from different backgrounds or we might live under the same roof, but we must love each other and get along with one another. Jacob's sons didn't always do that, but we need to learn from that and do better. We must represent Jesus to each other. We are one big family and God is our heavenly Father. Remember that we are God's children. **All believers are God's children, even though we may be different.**

Glass Symphony

You need a glass bottle or glass for each child (not to keep), food coloring, an eye dropper or spoon or ladle, four bowls, water, a metal spoon or fork for each child, a large table, and a plastic or paper table cloth.

Start each glass or bottle off with random amounts of water. Divide the glasses or bottles into four groups. Color the water in each group a different color. Call the groups by the colors that are in their containers: "red group," "blue group," etc.

Instruct each group to tap gently on their glasses and by adding or subtracting water from them, make all the groups "sound good together." This may end up as harmony or all on the same pitch,

but tell them to work together in deciding. Seeming chaos will erupt, but they are learning to work together. When they think they are done, conduct a few symphonies by pointing to the different groups.

Explain that the different groups represent different people groups and that we all are needed to make harmony.

Memory Verse Activity: Equipped Quiver

You will need plastic drinking straws, heavy paper (index card thickness), paper clips, brown paper bags, and string.

Help the kids make arrows by cutting two 1 1/2" slits in the ends of each straw. Cut a paper triangle, which is 2" on each side for each arrow. This slides into the slits you cut.

Put a paper clip in the point end of the arrow. The paper bag is the quiver. Fold the top edge of the open bag down once. Punch two holes in the double part of the bag for the string.

Let kids do as much as they can themselves. Five arrows constitute a full quiver.

Explain that you will look closely at the benefits of a well-equipped quiver. What can arrows be used for? Protection, getting food, fun and many other things. Compare the quiver full of arrows with a godly family (Psalm 127:3-5).

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of thanksgiving for our adoption as His sons and daughters. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the gospel, give them opportunity to do so.