



Genesis 29 - Answers

The Ultimate Dysfunctional Family

Look up the word "dysfunctional" in the dictionary
and you should see: "the families of Isaac and Jacob".

- It starts out so fine: Isaac and Rebekah love the Lord God and want to have a godly family.
- They have twins, Jacob and Esau...and downhill it goes.
- Rebekah loved Jacob the best.
- Isaac loved Esau the best.
- Rebekah stoops to lying and cheating (manipulating) in order to make her husband do what she wants him to do.
- Jacob is also a manipulator, and cheats Esau.
- Esau wants to kill Jacob.
- Jacob has to run away from his home.
- Esau does not love the One, True God.
- Jacob loves the One, True God, but he lives a life full of sin.
- Esau marries ungodly women in order to spite his mother and father.
- We will see...Jacob ends up with 2 wives...Esau has many
- Jacob in turn will be cheated and lied to by his uncle, Laban.
- Jacob in this chapter will bring 4 children into the world, all from a wife he does not love.
- The wife Jacob does love cannot have children.

How did it get so bad? Isaac was the "son of promise". All of God's magnificent promises to Isaac's father, Abraham, have passed on to Isaac. The land is his....the innumerable descendants will come from him....the future blessing of the world rests on his shoulders.

How did this little family full of the future get so off-track?

Where is the sweet relationship with the One, True God that Abraham had?
(we will see the answer to this in future chapters)

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:1-3

1. What is the first thing Jacob goes toward as he approaches the land of his destination?

He heads toward a well.

2. What is a very practical reason Jacob would seek out a well?

He was probably thirsty - in fact, a well was probably a place of stopping for all travelers, since a traveler had a basic need which could not be denied for long - thirst.

And, if he was looking for social contact the well was the place to find it. He would find out where he was, how far he was from where he was heading, and he would learn the latest news of the area. A well was a social place.

3. If you were new to an area, what place would you go to meet people?

:4-6

4. Is it just a coincidence that Jacob meets up so soon with the very people he is seeking?

No, of course not. We see over and over again that there are no coincidences. God's hand is always on every situation we find ourselves in.

:7-10

5. What does Jacob do for these shepherds?

He rolls the stone away and waters their flocks. A very kind thing for a traveler to do.

6. Does he have a motive other than just being helpful to a group of shepherds?

I think the very pretty shepherdess who has just arrived may have something to do with his generosity.

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:11&12

7. Why is Jacob so emotional?

For one thing, he's probably tired. He's away from home. He has found the little community of people he has been seeking. He's probably relieved that his journey is over. He might be lonely. He might be homesick and happy that he is once again with family.

And - as we have already seen and will see in future chapters - Jacob is a very emotional guy. That's the way he's wired up.

:13-15

8. Why all the kissing?

This is not romantic kissing - but simply an expression of "hello".

9. How long does Jacob stay with his uncle, Laban, as his guest?

One month.

10. Even though Jacob is Laban's guest for this month, does it look like he is also working for Laban? Why would he do that?

It was common practice to work alongside your host when you stayed with him. Of course...what else would you do? There were not a whole lot of vacation or recreational choices for what to do with yourself during the day.

11. Is Laban offering Jacob a job?

Yes.

:16&17

12. What was the difference between Laban's two daughters?

One was pretty - one was not.

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:18-20

13. What "wages" does Jacob ask of Laban in order to stay on and work for him?

Jacob can't go back home - so staying is a pretty good idea. And it would only be right for Laban to pay him, so the "wages" Jacob most wants he asks for: He wants to marry the daughter of Laban - the pretty one - Rachel.

14. Why is he willing to work this hard and this long?

Love.

15. What are some of the hard things we are willing to do because of love?

16. What was Jesus willing to do because of love? (John 3:16)

:21-25

17. How could Jacob not have realized he was with the wrong sister?

It was dark. They had been partying. She must have been very quiet - no conversation. Oh well - who knows? He definitely was surprised at seeing Leah beside him in the morning.

:26-30

18. What do we now realize about Laban?

He's devious.

19. How is Jacob a lot like Laban?

Also devious.

20. Does Jacob get the girl he loves in the end?

Yes.

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21. What else does Jacob get?

He gets a situation he did not ask for. A wife he did not want. He now is the husband of 2 wives - a disobedience to God's rules. And a whole keg of trouble will now open up as Jacob's family inherits another dysfunctional lifestyle.

:31-35

22. Who are the first 4 children born to Jacob?

Reuben, Simeon, Levi & Judah.

23. Who is their mother?

Leah.

24. What does Rachel have in common with Sarah and Rebekah?

She is barren. There will need to be a miracle for her to conceive and bare a child. Why so many barren women in this family? Opportunities for miracles - so that this little dysfunctional family will not forget Who is really in charge.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

25. What do you suppose the LORD is teaching Jacob?

26. What do you suppose the LORD is teaching Rachel?

27. What good things are coming out of a bad situation?

This dysfunctional family will embarrass us and make us mad as we read through the rest of their history. We will want to spank them, to lecture them, to throw up our hands in the air and we will be tempted to ask God to abandon them!but through them will come startling works of God. We will be shocked at God's plan for this crazy family, crippled with sin.

- The 12 sons of Jacob will become the 12 tribes of Israel - the nation of Israel.
- All 12 tribes will be miraculously brought out of Egypt at the time of the Passover.
- They will inherit the land of Israel - splitting it up into 12 different sections.

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- From one of these sons (Judah) will come the Messiah of Israel (about 2,000 years later)
- The New Jerusalem in the New Heaven and the New Earth will have 12 gates - each of them bearing the name of one of the 12 sons of Jacob.